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EXTREMISM IN THE ARMED FORCES

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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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EXTREMISM IN THE ARMED FORCES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, March 24, 2021.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 12:00 p.m., via Webex, Hon. Adam Smith (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. Go ahead and call the meeting to order.

Full Committee on Armed Services meeting today to discuss extremism in the armed services. I will introduce our witnesses in just a moment.

But first, this hearing is going to be mostly virtual. Mr. Rogers and I and a few others are here in the room, but most of our members are participating remotely. Two of our three witnesses are here. One of them is participating remotely.

So I will read our little remote hearing statement here.

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Finally, I have designated a committee staff member to, if necessary, mute unrecognized members' microphones to cancel any inadvertent background noise that may disrupt the proceeding.

With that, I want to thank our witnesses for joining us and for having this hearing. I think this is a very important discussion, and to begin with one of my biggest goals for this hearing is to better define our terms.

We have heard a lot recently about extremism within the military. I think it's really crucially important that we drill down and understand what that means and what we're really trying to get at, and how we want to make sure that we remove that from the—from the military.

It is not the case that extremism is simply anyone who disagrees with your political views, and I think, increasingly, I've seen some sort of take it to that level.

You know, we—you know, people who serve in the military are entitled to have political views. Those views will undoubtedly be different from each other, and we have to figure out how to make that work.

But extremism itself is something that goes way beyond that and something that we are concerned about, and I want to sort of put it into two categories for the purpose of this hearing.

One is, you know, the concerns that we have with a rise in white supremacy and white nationalism and racism, and this sort of dovetails with another challenge that we're taking on in the military and that is the need to increase diversity in the military.

Secretary Austin gave very, very powerful testimony during his confirmation hearing about his experience, you know, coming up as a black person within the military and rising through the ranks and some of the challenges that he faced.

And there is no doubt when you look at the military right now, particularly in terms of our leadership, it does not reflect the diversity of our country, and there is much more work that needs to be done.

It is also unequivocally clear that racism continues to occur within the ranks, and we must work to root out this bigotry and deal with that problem in a comprehensive manner.

I applaud Secretary Austin for the steps he has taken since becoming Secretary. As most of you know, he has ordered a series of stand-downs where you take a day to talk about this within the ranks.

I think that is an excellent place to start. But there is much more work that needs to be done.

Lastly, there is a growing extremism that I am really troubled by and that is sort of anti-government extremism, and we hear this rhetoric constantly in many, many different forums, that somehow because our political side is not sufficiently winning that means that the entire system must be torn down and rebuilt, that we need a revolution, that the government is not legitimate, that it is fake, it is a fraud, it is all manner of different terrible and awful things that renders it illegitimate.

We cannot, under any circumstances, have that approach to our government within the military.

Now, I do understand the United States Constitution and we have free speech, and if people feel that way about their government, they are absolutely entitled to express that opinion. I disagree with it, strongly.

I think our republic is very strong. We have a system for resolving our differences. We should honor and respect that system and maintain the civil society that we have, and understand that a fully functioning civil society does not mean that you win every political argument.

It means that you have a chance to be heard and that when you lose there is a system in place that will keep our republic moving forward, and I wish people better understood that.

But within the military it is even more stark. If you serve in the military you pledge an oath to the United States Constitution and laws of this country.

If you disagree with that Constitution and you disagree with the laws of this country so strongly that you think our government is no longer legitimate, then you have no business serving in the United States military and you should get out now.

You pledge an oath to the Constitution and to these laws. They must be upheld and you must respect them in order to adequately serve within the military, and we have seen a rise of people who don't believe that way.

So I think it is crucially important that we identify that extremism, root it out, and get it out of the military, and then, as importantly, counter radicalization, if you will. Educate people along the way.

So why you—disagree without being disagreeable is a little bit understatement. But the idea that, yes, you can disagree with the laws but that doesn't mean that you think the whole institution should be torn down.

Okay. You can disagree with them. You have to uphold them, and I think it's crucially important, frankly, that we educate the entire country on that point but, certainly, within the military.

We have three witnesses with us today who are going to help us explore these issues, and I will introduce them to speak in a moment. But before I turn it over to Mr. Rogers, I will introduce them briefly now.

Dr. Audrey Kurth Cronin, who is a professor of international security and director of the Center for Security, Innovation, and New Technology at American University. We have Ms. Lecia Brooks, who is the chief of staff for the Southern Poverty Law Center; and Mr. Michael Berry, who is the general counsel for the First Liberty Institute.

I thank them all for being here. And before I turn over to them for their statements, I will turn it over to Mr. Rogers, the ranking member, for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE ROGERS, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM ALABAMA, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I also want to root out of the military those who actively participate in vile and violent hate groups. We cannot ask people to fight and die together under the shadow of racial hatred.

But it's important to remember that extremist behavior is already prohibited by the Uniform Code of Military Justice [UCMJ] and by each service's own regulations. It's also important to point

out that we lack any concrete evidence that violent extremism is rife in the military, as some commentators claim.

Since the start of FY [fiscal year] 2020, nine soldiers have been separated from the Army for misconduct where extremism was a factor; 9 out of nearly 1 million. Since 2018, 17 Marines have been separated for extremism, gang, or dissident activity. That's 17 over 3 years out of over 200,000.

While I agree with my colleagues that these numbers should be zero, this is far from the largest military justice issue facing our armed services. If this committee is going to attempt to address this issue, we need to be clear about what examining extremism means.

Over the past few years, other committees have grappled with this issue of extremism and domestic terrorism. They run into the same problem over and over—the First Amendment.

Service members are entitled to First Amendment rights when speaking out of uniform and in compliance with regulations. Frankly, service members have more free speech rights than most people may realize. They may worship freely, peacefully assemble, espouse political views, and engage with civic organizations.

Legislative attempts to further crack down on domestic terrorism is going to run headlong into the First Amendment rights of our service members, and doing so may have other consequences.

Earlier this year, over 150 overwhelmingly liberal organizations, including Human Rights Watch, the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], and SPLC [Southern Poverty Law Center] Action, urged Congress not to expand domestic terrorism charges.

And I ask unanimous consent, Mr. Chairman, to enter that letter into the record.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 135.]

Mr. ROGERS. These organizations said, quote, “We urge you to oppose any new domestic terrorism charge, the creation of a list of designated domestic terrorist organizations, or other expansion of existing nonterrorism-related authorities,” close quote.

The letter went on to say that ample tools exist to prosecute domestic terror and violent extremism, and that proposed new tools would be used against the vulnerable and political opponents in the name of national security.

So what should we do to address this issue? Now, online hives of hate prey on socially isolated people. They exploit fear and vulnerability with a radicalized ideology.

Fortunately, military life offers an unparalleled opportunity to stop radicalization using model leaders and peers to show the way. Empowering leaders to know their units and speak face to face with soldiers is an exceptional method to stop radicalization before it starts.

We should examine ways to encourage that interaction. I'm not naive enough to think that everyone who needs to step off the path toward violence or hatred will do so. That's why enforcing the current UCMJ prohibitions through administrative separations or court martials will remain an appropriate response in some cases.

Each service should keep track of these separations and examine them for patterns of conduct. If there's a better—if there's better

data to be had, then we should address that in the NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act].

But anecdotes and online polls should not be our guide, nor should we rush to create large-scale political surveillance programs to monitor service members' political leanings.

I hope our panel today can help us evaluate how the military's unique structure presents opportunities to address this issue within the framework of the Constitution.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. So we will start.

We'll turn it over to witness testimony and we'll start with Dr. Cronin. You are recognized.

STATEMENT OF AUDREY KURTH CRONIN, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR SECURITY, INNOVATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGY, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Ms. CRONIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee, thank you for your service to our country and for the honor of testifying before you today.

I come from a proud U.S. Navy family whose father and three brothers all served. My career has combined academic positions, including now as a distinguished professor at American University, and government service, including at the U.S. National War College, the Congressional Research Service, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy.

I speak from decades of experience working at the intersection of the military, technology, and extremism, and some of my testimony is based on my latest book, "Power to the People," which analyzes how nefarious individuals, groups, and private militias use digital technologies.

The violent extremism that erupted during the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol had a disproportionate number of current or former members of the U.S. Armed Forces leading the mob. Protecting patriotic service members who serve honorably and deserve our support even as we mitigate violent extremism in the ranks will be a long-term test. Educating and engaging our veterans is also vital.

The speed at which people are radicalized and mobilized via digital media has ramped up. This trend is heightening extremism and will not reverse itself because it is part of a new technological environment.

To meet this challenge, we must fully assess it, build a plan to address it, and institute trackable policies tailored to the digital age.

So what does this mean? The most immediate problem is an absence of good data. The 2021 Capitol insurrection leaves the impression that the number of extremists in the military is increasing.

Yet, DOD [Department of Defense] officials repeatedly claim that the number is small. No one truly knows. No serious plan can be built without defining the scope of the problem.

Second, the Department of Defense needs to build common standards and rules across all components. This means adopting a consistent definition of domestic violent extremism, identifying organizations that are dangerous, and developing a discharge code that can be tracked across all services.

Third, the best way to address extremism is to put a structure in place to ensure adequate oversight and follow-through. This could either be a confirmable Assistant Secretary of Defense or a senior-level civilian.

Fourth, digital literacy is a national security priority. Active Duty military members should have regular training to make them less susceptible to online manipulation. Veterans should be offered it as well.

This is imperative, not just for the extremist threat, but to defend against a broad range of information operations.

Finally, we must recognize and address the ongoing risks of digital technology. This means better screening of open source social media and website use while protecting the constitutional rights of our members.

Permission to access that information is already provided through the clearance process. The digital environment has enhanced the ability to radicalize, project power, and integrate tactical systems.

In the 20th century, it required a national army to do all three of those things—mobilization, power projection, and systems integration. Now terrorists, extremists, and militias can do them all.

If we do not address the effects of our new digital landscape, we will never get on top of this problem. Only two things can truly defeat the United States Armed Forces: undermining the American people's trust and cleavages within the ranks.

Every other enemy can be met with unity, determination, effectiveness, and success. Perhaps the silver lining of the horrible specter of storming the U.S. Capitol will be the resolve to address extremism in a profound and lasting way.

To do that, we need comprehensive information, planning, and action to include measures that I've outlined in my testimony.

Again, I thank you for the honor and privilege of being a witness at this hearing and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cronin can be found in the Appendix on page 57.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Brooks, you're recognized. I don't—is your microphone on?

STATEMENT OF LECIA BROOKS, CHIEF OF STAFF, SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you.

Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, members of the committee.

My name is Lecia Brooks and I serve as the chief of staff for the Southern Poverty Law Center. I'm also the proud daughter of a veteran of the Korean War and the mother of a son who served in the U.S. Army for 10 years. This issue is deeply personal to me.

Let me begin with two distinct points. First, the vast majority of those who serve in our Armed Forces have no connection to white

supremacy or extremism, and strive always to uphold the best traditions of our Nation's democratic ideals.

Second, the military has a growing problem with white supremacy and extremism because our country does. The white nationalist movement in the United States is surging and presents a serious danger to our country and its cherished institutions, threatening the morale and good order of those serving in our Armed Forces.

This is not a new problem. SPLC has been documenting white supremacists' infiltration of the military and urging officials to take action since 1986. That year, we wrote Defense Secretary Weinberger and exposed the fact that Active Duty Marines at Camp Lejeune were participating in paramilitary Ku Klux Klan activities and stealing military weaponry.

Today, we know one in five of those arrested in connection with the deadly January 6th Capitol insurrection riots has served or is serving in the military. This is a dramatic illustration of the insufficient efforts we have made to inoculate service members against acting upon extremist ideologies.

Veterans and service members are high-value recruitment targets for extremist groups. They bring social capital, legitimacy, specialized weapons training, leadership skills, and an increased capacity for violence to these groups.

Over the last several years, SPLC researchers and journalists have identified dozens of former and active military personnel among the membership of some of the country's most dangerous and violent white supremacist groups.

Those groups include the Atomwaffen Division, a neo-Nazi group, and the Boogaloo movement. In addition, The Base. A number of individuals affiliated with this particular white nationalist group have military ties.

SPLC has analyzed more than 80 hours of calls between Base recruits and [the] group's leadership, and found that roughly 20 percent of the recruits claimed to have military experience.

SPLC has been sounding this alarm for over 30 years. Today, we are here to sound the alarm again. But we are more optimistic than ever that this President, this Secretary of Defense, and indeed, this committee will devote the time and attention needed to address this problem.

Our testimony includes a number of policy recommendations for the Defense Department and Congress.

One, words matter. It is impossible to overstate the importance of military leaders speaking out against hate and extremism among their troops.

Two, rules matter. Consistent with the First Amendment, the Department of Defense should expand and clarify existing prohibitions against advocating for or involvement in supremacist or extremist activity.

We must also expand and clearly define protections for whistleblowers, chain of command oversight responsibilities, and reporting requirements.

Three, who and what our military honor matters. The Department of Defense should immediately rename the 10 U.S. Army bases named for Confederate leaders. We're aware that a study

commission has begun its work, but there is no reason to wait 3 years to rename these bases.

We applaud the current Marine Corps and Navy prohibitions against the display of the Confederate battle flag and other racist symbols in workspaces, offices, vehicles, and vessels. We urge the Defense Department to uniformly apply these regulations across all service branches.

And, finally, support for our troops and veterans matters. We urge you to expand support services that work to deradicalize our Active Duty service members and veterans reentering civilian life.

As I said earlier, this issue is deeply personal to me. My father joined a military that was desegregated before public schools were. We had a Black Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before we had a Black President. The military has always represented our highest ideals. That is why I was so proud when my son enlisted.

As long as there's racism in the larger society, it will be incumbent upon leaders in the military to lead the way. SPLC looks forward to being of service to you.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Brooks can be found in the Appendix on page 76.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Mr. Berry.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BERRY, GENERAL COUNSEL,
FIRST LIBERTY INSTITUTE**

Mr. BERRY. Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, and committee members, good afternoon on behalf of First Liberty Institute.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

First Liberty Institute is a national legal organization whose mission is to defend and restore religious liberty for all Americans. I'm here today to urge this committee to maintain a strong and diverse military while safeguarding our service members' constitutional rights.

A truly diverse military is one that is open and welcoming to all who meet the standards of service regardless of their religious beliefs, worldview, or political persuasion.

We should reject any attempt to weaponize anti-extremism efforts against classes of people simply because those in authority disapprove of them. Instead, we should focus on eradicating true extremism from the ranks.

By true extremism I mean those who would use, threaten, or advocate violence to accomplish their objectives. I seriously doubt anyone in this hearing disagrees with the notion that there must be zero tolerance for true extremists in the Armed Forces.

Indeed, nobody wants to see such people removed from our military more than those of us who have sworn the oath of service. But unless Congress and the Department of Defense take adequate measures to ensure First Amendment rights are safeguarded, there is a real risk that the military will fall prey to partisan politicization and needlessly expose it to the threat of litigation.

Our service members are more than capable of handling a little diversity of opinion. I should know. When I joined the U.S. Marine

Corps, I was thrust into a strange new environment in which I was surrounded by people who held attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies very different from my own.

Some of them even voiced disapproval of my own lifestyle choices. But I was reassured by my superiors that this is a feature of military service, not a defect.

My exposure to different, even conflicting, beliefs and ideologies actually made me a better Marine, and I wouldn't trade my experiences for the world. I observed firsthand that diversity really does make our military stronger and more capable.

I would proudly serve alongside anyone who earned the title of U.S. Marine, period. That is the beauty of America and of our military. No matter what our background is, what unites us is far greater than what divides us.

Our military truly personifies "E pluribus unum." And thankfully, those who threaten, use, or advocate violence to accomplish their objectives are rare. First Liberty fully supports efforts to remove them from the military.

And the good news is that the military has mechanisms to accomplish that that are more than adequate. The Uniform Code of Military Justice and our regulations and policies have prohibited extremist conduct for decades. Our military justice system routinely prosecutes violators.

But we do not and cannot criminalize thoughts or beliefs just because we don't agree with them. To do so would be to violate bedrock First Amendment principles. In fact, protecting unpopular or disfavored beliefs is precisely why the First Amendment exists.

Indeed, the First Amendment would be entirely unnecessary if its only role would be to defend that which needs no defense.

Expanding anti-extreme efforts to punish thought or belief is risky for another reason. What is popular or favored today might actually become tomorrow's thought crime.

For evidence of this, look no further than the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, or DEOMI. Several years ago, DEOMI was embroiled in scandal because it published training materials that compared those who believe in individual liberties, states' rights, and making the world a better place with the Ku Klux Klan, and the U.S. Army produced training materials that labeled evangelical Christians and Catholics as religious extremists alongside Hamas and al-Qaida. Never mind the fact that evangelicals and Catholics continue to comprise the majority of those serving in uniform today.

Labeling religious or political beliefs that are held by tens of millions of Americans as extremist is to declare them unwelcome and unfit to serve. It's to say Uncle Sam does not want you.

It also creates a *de facto*—*de facto* hostile work environment for the great many who are already serving who hold fast to those beliefs.

This, in turn, has a detrimental effect on recruiting, retention, and readiness. Put differently, protecting the First Amendment is truly a matter of national security.

In conclusion, the threat of extremists infiltrating our ranks is far outweighed by the threat to our Constitution if we allow partisanship and popularity to dictate policy.

First Liberty encourages the Congress to hold the Department of Defense accountable to the constitutional requirements of free speech and religious freedom. We must ensure that these paragons of American virtue are not only protected but cherished.

Once again, I thank the committee for this opportunity to present testimony on this issue of utmost importance.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Berry can be found in the Appendix on page 104.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

And let me just say, I wanted to mention I agree very much with what Mr. Rogers said. I don't think we need new domestic terrorism laws and no excuses for the Federal Government to, you know, violate people's individual rights.

But we do have a problem, and that becomes the challenge here. What—as I said at the outset, what is extremism? What is a legitimate political view? Certainly, being a Catholic is not extremism in the United States of America.

But I want to ask, because this is something I've wrestled with, is that is going to be in the eye of the beholder. In fact, I was struck, Mr. Berry, by your comment that we should accept people regardless of their worldview.

And that's not actually true. There are certain worldviews which we're not going to accept. I mean, if your worldview is completely in line with the Nazi Party or the Ku Klux Klan or Hamas, we're not going to accept you.

So we do have to make a choice here. It's not simply free speech, say what you want, believe what you want, it's all good. We have to make a choice as a society what we will tolerate and what we won't tolerate.

And that's where I think the debate sort of gets lost here. You know, people are, like, well, intolerance is bad, you know, or, no, discrimination is bad. Well, it depends on what you're discriminating against and it depends on what you're being tolerant of, and that's what we have to sort of walk through.

So I guess, Mr. Berry, I would ask, do you see what Ms. Brooks has talked about? Do you see that there is still a white nationalism problem, that there's a white supremacy problem that must be addressed?

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Chairman, I actually agree with Secretary Austin when he said that 99.9 percent of our service members are good, honorable people who love America, and we actually have adequate laws, regulations, and policies in place to address the .01 percent who are truly causing problems and have no place in our military.

The CHAIRMAN. So you don't—you don't see a rise in white nationalism or anything beyond? Because I'm not talking about changing laws here. We're talking about using those laws to address an issue that is in front of us.

Mr. BERRY. Well, I am not aware of the actual data. I assume that the Department of Defense has that data, and if they do they haven't published it, to my knowledge.

So to the extent that the numbers are, you know, increasing, if they are increasing, you know, then that becomes a, I think, an enforcement problem but not a problem of simply identifying who or

what is an extremist or, more problematically, expanding that definition.

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely.

Dr. Cronin, I was really interested in your comments on the digital world out there and this is—this is a nightmare for all employers and for all individuals as well. How much are you entitled to look at what the people who work for you are doing online and then react to it?

So I'm curious if you could drill down a little bit on how you see implementing that. If you're, you know, within the military, you're trying to, you know, root out extremist views or other things, you know, how does that work within the context of the First Amendment if the United States military—to look at the social media history of the people serving?

Ms. CRONIN. Well, I think it is very important to protect the First Amendment rights of our service members. So let me just stipulate that. Nothing that I would support with respect to social media would be impinging upon those rights.

But at the moment, I think that the Department of Defense is finding itself less willing to look at open source material than many employers are, many people who are just vetting interns or students even at my university when they're going to be accepted or at any university.

I think that there should be a consistent way to be on top of what is open source information about military members and that is not currently being consistently pursued.

There's an uneven degree to which our investigative services vet what is happening on open source social media, and I think that we could use more aggressive tools to be able to at least have one single policy across the Department of Defense that watches out for keywords, for example, or looks for particular memes and keeps on top of the symbology.

I think the Department of Defense is falling behind, in many cases, and doesn't necessarily have access to the most up-to-date information that they need.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

And, Ms. Brooks, I wanted to ask you sort of along the lines of what I asked Mr. Berry, because that's the challenge we have when we go after extremism.

You know, we—you know, those of us [audio interference] Democrats are going to look at it and say, you know, if you're part of, you know, white supremacist groups, the Ku Klux Klan, and all that, that is what we're going after.

And then on the other side it's, like, well, no, you're just going after people who disagree with liberal orthodoxy—Catholics, evangelical Christians, or whatever.

How do you, when you're—when the Southern Poverty Law Center is going after extremism, how do you draw that distinction between what is legitimate extremism and what is just sort of, you know, a legitimate conservative viewpoint?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you for the question. Let's be clear that the Southern Poverty Law Center defines a hate group as an organization that, based on their own official statements or principles and the statements of their leaders, has beliefs or practices that attack

or malign an entire class of people, typically based on their immutable characteristics.

So the Southern Poverty Law Center is also a proud defender of the First Amendment. It's about the actions and the words of the group or the association or its leadership.

To be clear, the Southern Poverty Law Center is not anti-Christian at all, that we identify people with our hate group lists based on what they say and what they do.

It has nothing to do with being against marriage equality. Certainly, there are hundreds of churches and institutions that are anti-marriage equality that are not on our hate group list.

And I would also offer that the Southern Poverty Law Center recently did a staff survey and over 65 percent of the—of the Southern Poverty Law Center staff identify as Christian. And in addition, we have people who identify with other religions, of course.

So it's not about thought. It really is about action. So I think that Mr. Berry and I are in agreement. I'm certainly in agreement with Dr. Cronin, that we support the First Amendment but we do need to do something about extremism.

Let me offer a definition that we use. It's from a scholar, J.M. Berger. Extremism refers to the belief that an in-group's success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against the out-group.

That's our definition of extremism.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Mr. Rogers.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Berry, based on your law practice, what is it you should look out for with any potential extremism policy from the DOD?

Mr. BERRY. Without an appropriate definition of extremism, Mr. Rogers, then there's a real risk that we will do violence to the First Amendment. That has been my experience in my legal practice. And when that happens, when that occurs, the real harm is to our troops and to our Nation, to our readiness.

The most recent available data indicates those who identify as highly religious are the most likely to join the military.

And yet, if there are, as I indicated in my remarks, there are publications produced and published by the Department of Defense indicating that people who identify as evangelical Christian or Catholic or of other faith groups are at least considered possibly extremist, that you're essentially telling those who are, according to data, most likely to join our military that they're unwelcome, that they should look somewhere else.

Mr. ROGERS. Okay. What role do our leaders play in identifying violent extremism? What should we expect from those leaders?

Mr. BERRY. Well, extremism does not grow in a vacuum. Service members are actively recruited and preyed upon. Our leaders are really the first line of defense because the military—military service is first and foremost a human enterprise.

And so our leaders must offer a superior alternative to extremism, much in the same way that we must offer a superior alternative to a lifestyle involved in criminal gang activity and things of that nature.

And when we do that, when we actually place the emphasis on the human enterprise aspect of the military, then—and our leadership—excuse me, our leaders understand that their position and roles as leaders is paramount, then those who—those who are entrusted with special trust and confidence to defend our Nation, they understand that they will be held to a higher standard, and my experience in the military has always been tell your young Marines or soldiers, sailors, airmen, et cetera, that you have set a high standard of conduct and expectations for them. They will rise up to that and meet that.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Fallon.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We're here to determine truth and not—and that should be our aim. Not my truth or your truth, but the truth. We're having a committee hearing entitled "Extremism in the Armed Forces."

Now, why? Has this proven itself to be a major problem, and if so, we should not just have this hearing today but we should have many others, because if extremism is systemic then it threatens not just the military, but our country, and it needs to be rooted out.

Many people say follow the science. Okay. Then where is the data and evidence that suggests that extremism in any form is rampant, major, and systemic, and it's a problem in our services?

Professor Cronin stated the 2021 Capitol insurrection leaves the impression that the number of extremists in the military is increasing. Also stated that of the 312 rioters arrested on January 6th, she stated that 34 were veterans and 3 were reservists.

There are 18 million U.S. veterans. Thirty-four were rioters. This means that 17,999,966 of us were not. One out of 529,000. And, you know, Professor Cronin, she attended Princeton and Oxford and Harvard, and you would think an infinitesimally small figure like nineteen one hundred thousandths of 1 percent is an indication of extremism on the rise? I mean, I can't believe that.

The service right now we have over 2.4 million Active Duty and reservists serving. Three reservists were in the Capitol 2 months ago. Three. Literally, 1 out of 800,000. The Capitol riot leaves—a learned person like the professor leave the impression that the extremism is on the rise of the military. I just—I can't—I can't fathom it.

And Ms. Brooks works for the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Ms. Brooks, just a yes or no question for you. Has your organization named the American Legion as a hate group?

[No response.]

Mr. FALLON. You have to turn your mic on.

Ms. BROOKS. I don't believe so. I don't have the full list, sir, of the hate group list but—

Mr. FALLON. Okay. I found it and it did. And how about were you aware that the organization named the VFW, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, as a hate group?

Ms. BROOKS. Not on our current census, no.

Mr. FALLON. You had in the past. The next—

Ms. BROOKS. Yes, and I'm happy to—I'm happy to present you with the research for the—for the record as to why these groups—

Mr. FALLON. Okay. No, that's fine. It's just a yes or no question.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's operations and motives and credibility leave a lot to be desired. Recently, The Washington Post, The New York Times, Politico, NPR [National Public Radio], and The New Yorker magazine, just to name a few, skewered the SPLC for, among other things, corruption, harassment, racism, and a widening credibility gap.

These aforementioned media outlets aren't exactly known for their conservative leanings either. And you've stated emphatically in the written record that hate is on the rise.

Well, enter Bob Moser. He's a former employee of the SPLC. Mr. Moser confesses he's a lifelong liberal, and in The New Yorker he described working at the SPLC as a highly profitable scam.

He worked there for 3 years and he went on to say, and I quote, "The hyperbolic fundraising appeals and the fact that though the center claimed to be effective in fighting extremism, quote, unquote, 'hate' always continued to be on the rise, more dangerous than ever with each year's report on hate groups, the SPLC making hate pay."

It sounds like without hate you all don't get paid.

Members, look, let's look at the data we do have. Our office reached out to all four branches of the service and asked one simple question: how many members of your branch were separated last year due to extremist activities?

The Marine Corps gave us the data. Out of 222,000 current and Active Duty—reservists and Active Duty Marines, a total of 4 were separated last year for extremist activity, leaving us, once again, with an infinitesimally tiny figure of 1 out of 55,475.

This isn't a hearing about the readiness of our Armed Forces. It's nothing more, unfortunately, than political theater.

We should be addressing things we know the military needs: maintaining and modernizing a nuclear triad that's falling apart; whether or not we're going to match the 7 percent increase that a resurgent and aggressive China is proposing; how best to meet the threat of Russia, Iran, North Korea, to name a few.

What about our posturing and the posture of forces in the Middle East with a May 1st deadline fast approaching?

And personnel-wise, how about—

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired. The gentleman's time has expired. And I will point out, we have had hearings on all of those topics that the gentleman just listed, just last week, as matter of fact.

So the false choice, the idea that because we pause for one moment to have a hearing on extremism in the military we are ignoring all of this other stuff is simply ludicrous. We have had hearings on every single one of those issues just listed and we will continue to have those hearings.

Second, I will just point out a couple of simple little math issues. Twenty percent of the people that have been arrested from the Capitol Hill riots had a history of serving in the military one way or the other.

To then say that, well, those are the only people in the military that could possibly be involved in extremism is simply logically absurd and I'm sure the gentleman would recognize that.

We don't know for sure how large the problem is. That's why we're having the hearing. That's why we're having the conversation. And part of this is also to bring people in who have differing views.

We have Mr. Berry from his organization, we have Ms. Brooks from her organization, because we want to have a robust debate on the subject to determine how large the problem is.

So that's the purpose of a hearing. I guess the question is, is there enough evidence out there to warrant a further examination.

Well, I don't think we should have had 1 percent of the people storming the U.S. Capitol having served in the military. That we had 20 percent is cause to go, hmm, maybe we should look and see what else is there.

That is the purpose of a hearing and the purpose of political dialogue, and just because it doesn't 100 percent line up with your worldview doesn't mean that we don't get to talk about it. So we are going to talk about it.

Mr. Langevin, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'm glad you set the record straight because I was troubled by the some of the previous comments, and let me respectfully disagree with my colleague who was speaking before Mr. Fallon.

I don't see any of this as political theater. It is a fact that we have a problem with some of the actions and the views expressed by members of the military are out there, and it can have a very corrosive effect and we want to make sure that we address this and nip it in the bud so that it doesn't spread or corrode further.

So, you know, one of the few institutions of government that still enjoy a high degree of respect among the general population, the public, is our military and, thankfully, our—the members of the public still have high confidence in our men and women in uniform.

It's important to note that. In fact, obviously, there—it is my understanding, everything I have seen, whether it's polls or statistics, that service members are considered highly credible sources on social media.

So Dr. Cronin, would you agree with that assessment? And, you know, if—when service members spread misinformation online, what impact does that have on society?

Ms. CRONIN. I think that the views of service members are always given much more weight than those of the general population, largely, because they've gone through specialized training.

They are an admirable subset of our American community. And I think that they can have extra emphasis and extra weight to the things that they put on social media.

I'd also like to say, sir, that terrorism is a danger that arises from very small numbers, and so I think looking at the entire number of people within any organization as any sort of an indicator of what the threat of terrorism or extremism is would not be a rigorous way to approach it.

Mr. LANGEVIN. And what metrics can you use to measure the impact of mis- and disinformation on service members?

Ms. CRONIN. Well, we don't have very good metrics yet. This is one of the reasons why I'm very grateful that this committee is having this hearing, because I think that the Department of Defense is not consistently tracking exactly what those metrics are. So I cannot give you a good answer, Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Okay. And, Dr. Cronin, what tools or methods can the Department of Defense adopt from other Federal agencies, academic institutions, or counter-radicalization organizations to make service members more resilient against extremist information campaigns?

Ms. CRONIN. I think that there's a wealth of new types of tools that would be of great use to the Department of Defense. We can go to the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and use the FBI database across the entire Department.

There are allies who have engaged in excellent deradicalization programs that we should be consulting in order to learn how best to—not just to force people out of the service. That should be the last resort.

But to make sure that they're resilient to the kinds of approaches that are made to them. One of the problems, and it's increasing in our current technological environment, is that members of the military and former members of the military—we must also talk about our veterans—they are particularly valuable to extremist groups and they are targeted for recruitment, and this is, indeed, becoming an increasing problem.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you. My next question—you know, I'm encouraged by the recent steps the Department of Defense has taken to address extremism in the ranks. But a one-time stand-down or annual PowerPoint training isn't enough, in my opinion.

So Dr. Cronin, Ms. Brooks, how can the military implement a program that avoids the pitfalls of check-the-box training to produce sustained success in limiting extremism?

Maybe we start with Ms. Brooks.

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you so much for the question.

We completely agree. It's not a one size fits all. It's not a one-time one and done and, certainly, it's more than a PowerPoint presentation.

We're encouraged by the Secretary of Defense's call for the stand-down as an initial conversation, initial starting point. We're also very grateful to the chairman and this committee for what we understand is a full committee hearing has not been done on this topic ever, if at all.

So we appreciate that, and we see this as the beginning of an ongoing conversation, just like the rest of the country.

To be clear, the military, as Dr. Cronin has alluded to, is no different than any other segment of society, as we continue as a country to—

The CHAIRMAN. And I apologize, Ms. Brooks. The gentleman's time has expired. I should have explained that up front.

Ms. BROOKS. Oh.

The CHAIRMAN. A lot of times they throw questions at you and there's 10 seconds left, and then you're—but we try to keep the time because we have a lot of members who want to get in.

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Wilson is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank the panelists for being with us today. And, Mr. Berry, I greatly appreciate your Marine JAG [judge advocate general] service. It's critically important that our service members have one overarching loyalty and that is to protecting the citizens of the United States and her interest.

The DOD has various directives that guide the political activity of its members and can punish extremist behavior under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which I appreciate as a former JAG officer myself and also the father of a current JAG officer.

I want your assessment as to whether we need additional legislation or can we rely on the guidelines we have now and the Uniform Code of Military Justice without additional legislation?

Mr. BERRY. Thank you. I believe that the existing guidelines are adequate as long as we maintain an appropriate definition of what extremism is and I, again, go back to my earlier definition, which is anyone who uses, threatens, or advocates violence to accomplish their objectives. There's nobody that I'm aware of who wants to see those people serving in our military.

But beyond that, we have Uniform Code of Military Justice provisions that address violence, that address contemptuous language towards superiors and official.

We have Uniform Code of Military Justice provisions that address conduct unbecoming, and we also have DOD regulations. DOD Instruction 1325.06 is one that comes to mind to address prohibited dissident activity as well.

So, again, it's—the existing regulations and policies are adequate, and if the—if the Congress decides that it wants to amend that, then my strong encouragement would be to do so in a manner that ensures robust protection for the First Amendment.

Nothing will erode public trust and confidence in our military faster than the belief, whether perception or reality, but the belief that the military no longer protects First Amendment rights for its service members.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you for that response, and in particular, thank you for citing the definition of violence. I think that's so critical so that it's not too broadly interpreted.

I also, for you, I'm grateful that I represent Fort Jackson, which is the home of the Army's great Drill Sergeant Academy. Every drill sergeant in the Army is trained at Fort Jackson. They do an exemplary job and are an important first step in shaping our new recruits with the wonderful opportunities they have for military service.

Do you have any suggestions on how they can identify extremism and address potential cases within the brief 2 to 3 months that they have to work with recruits?

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Wilson, I did not have the privilege of going through basic training at Fort Jackson, although I have taught at the other fine institution you have there, the Army Chaplain School.

But I will say, based on my own experience when I was on Active Duty in the Marine Corps, two phrases that I heard frequently were, protect what you've earned, and police your own, right.

In other words, the institution of the military is one that has a proud heritage, and it's when we begin to—I believe I heard somebody use the phrase earlier ostracization or social isolationism.

Those are the—I think those are when service members become very susceptible to being recruited away to join, you know, criminal gang activity or even radicalized via extremism.

In fact, that's what we saw in the wars on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. That's how local citizens became radicalized as well, is they were isolated and eventually won over by the extremists and the radicals.

The same thing can happen in our military. So I go back to one of my earlier responses. It's a leadership issue. This is—this is and always will be a leadership issue, and when you combine good leadership with sound enforcement of existing law and policy, I think we'll begin to see positive results and outcomes.

Mr. WILSON. And I'm really grateful, Mr. Berry, too, that Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has made it a priority to hold accountable anybody who broke the law on January the 6th.

We don't—we should not have people who support violence in the military. Additionally, but I'm concerned that there may be efforts to have a by name lists of prohibited organizations. What is your view about developing lists?

Mr. BERRY. I do believe that lists can be dangerous, as I stated in my earlier remarks, or labeling evangelical Christians and Catholics as extremists is opening Pandora's box.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. WILSON. And I share your concern. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Speier is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. I think it's really important for us to recognize that we were looking at this issue long before January 6th.

In fact, last February, the Military Personnel Subcommittee held a hearing entitled, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy in the Military: How to Stop It," and as part of the NDAA last year, all of us supported an amendment to create a UCMJ article on violent extremism and the amendment to create a person within the Inspector General's office, a Deputy Inspector General, to deal with the issue of both diversity and extremism.

So this has more to do with just looking at this issue in the cold light of day.

Let me go to you, Ms. Brooks. The DOD policy currently prohibits active participation and active advocacy of white supremacy and violent extremism, but it does not prohibit membership in [audio interference] organizations.

Should the DOD revisit this policy and prohibit membership in violent extremist organizations that seek to overthrow the government or start a race war?

Ms. BROOKS. I'm sorry, Congresswoman. There was a break in the Zoom so I didn't get the question. But you're absolutely right, that is the current prohibition against membership, and that's in-

teresting because what we're finding at the Southern Poverty Law Center is that as groups become more and more diffused, it's not as black and white to identify a member to say whether or not membership constitutes actual activity.

And so we, certainly, support the current military prohibitions against active participation in these groups. But we don't know that it should just solely fall on membership or not because, certainly, one can be—can actively participate without being a member.

Ms. SPEIER. So there was a master sergeant, Cory Reeves, who was a Colorado airman who was a member of the Identity Europa group, which is a white supremacist organization.

He actually was a fundraiser in that organization and actively sought members. When that was discovered, he was reduced in rank but not actually removed from the military.

So in that case, there was active advocacy of white supremacy and it violated the DOD policy, but there wasn't an effort to remove him until it became publicly known as a result of our hearing.

Ms. Cronin, let me move to you. The security clearance adjudicative guidelines indicate that the Federal agency should not be granting security clearances to people with associations or sympathy with persons or organizations that advocate, threaten, or use force or violence, or use other illegal or unconstitutional means to overthrow the government, prevent government personnel from performing official duties, gain retribution for perceived wrongs caused by the government, and prevent others from exercising their constitutional rights.

This seems pretty clear to me. All service members are supposed to be able to obtain a Secret or Top Secret security clearance, and we expect cleared individuals to not sympathize with violent extremists. Yet, we allow military service members to be members of such organizations.

Do you agree that this is a contradiction and what should we do about it?

Ms. CRONIN. Yes, Ms. Speier, I strongly agree, and I think the problem is that we don't have a joining up of the UCMJ and the clearance process.

We don't have a consistent way of looking at exactly how we are evaluating our service members. The degree to which these rules are enforced across different services differs greatly, and commanders tend to look on a case-by-case basis.

So it is a serious problem, I believe.

Ms. SPEIER. And you talked about a digital literacy. Do you think it's appropriate that recruiters look at the Facebook pages of potential members of the military, much like the private sector looks at the social media pages of potential employees?

Ms. CRONIN. Yes, ma'am. I think that's an extremely important step that we should take. It's no different from what happened in the 1990s when there was a problem with gang violence and there was an institution of examining tattoos, and the military sent out a whole set of booklets about what those tattoos were.

So I think we should be doing the same thing in our current technological environment and looking at people's digital behavior.

Ms. SPEIER. I thank the lady. My time has expired.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mr. Wittman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WITTMAN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate our witnesses for joining us today.

Mr. Berry, I wanted to go to you. I know that as we talk about the gravity of the allegations of extremism within the ranks of the military, this is an extraordinarily serious charge and I think it's good that we have the discussion about this.

I want to emphasize that our military are highly professional, highly trained, highly motivated, and highly capable, and the overwhelming majority of people that are in our United States military do so out of a sense of patriotism, out of a sense of leadership. So I think we have to be very careful about how we characterize this particular effort.

I want to make sure we get after extremism in the ranks. No two ways about it. It is a corrosive force within our ranks, wherever it exists.

And I want to make sure that as we look to root out extremism, we don't fall into a self-fulfilling prophecy where leaders look to quell freedom of expression within the ranks. Ultimately, in doing that, I think you sow even, potentially, more extremism.

So let me—let me get your your perspective on this. I want to make sure that we look at having a carefully vetted and curated effort that's done by a central nonpartisan authority to make sure that we look at truly what is extremism—as you point out, what is true extremism.

And I fear that if we do it any other way, we're going to fall victim to the whims and be subject to the ideology of local commanders, or worse, political appointees, where things become a political measure metric.

Mr. Berry, I want you to give us your thoughts. As a Marine yourself, you understand the very basic power of the command structure and what that has on a service member's thought processes if they start labeling wrong thoughts or wrong beliefs.

Extremism, as you know, is a widely defined term. Who gets to decide where we cross from personal or religious belief into a disagreed upon extremist belief is the central mantra of what has to be addressed with this.

It can be a slippery slope if we're not very careful that we could, potentially, never undo. How, in your estimation, are we ensuring that political ideology of our leadership doesn't quell open and honest dialogue within the ranks?

Mr. BERRY. Thank you, Mr. Wittman.

I mean, that—I think that is the challenge that is before us and before our leadership, and I do want to be clear that I, certainly, can speak from my experiences but I am here speaking in my civilian capacity and not on behalf of the Department of Defense.

But I will say that my background is as a—as a litigator. So I come from this—I come to this issue from that perspective of having looked at and practiced many years of representing service members and both in uniform and now in my civilian capacity.

And I think if there's anything that the case law teaches us, it is the importance, just how vital it is that we have a good working definition. I think that's the starting point.

Because if you go—if we go all the way back to 1919, during the height of what at that time was a socialism scare, you had the Supreme Court of the United States saying that somebody could be convicted for publishing literature that urged people to resist the draft and they said because that was unpatriotic un-American activity, and that's when we created the clear and present danger test.

You fast forward to 2008, just a little over 10 years ago, and an Active Duty service member actually had their conviction reversed by the highest military court when they used the internet to promote their white supremacist views, and the court said that although they expressed those views, they did not actively advocate for violence.

And then just a few years later, you had somebody, again, post on a social media forum that they want to, quote/unquote, "Kill the President," and that one was upheld because that was advocating violence.

So there you start to see the case law is creating these clear distinctions and differences, and I think that's where the policy and the law needs to be is in reflecting those clear divisions because, otherwise, as I've stated earlier, we risk creating such a wide net that it begins to capture things that the First Amendment and Constitution were never intended to capture, which is what somebody believes, what God they worship, or what they look like.

Mr. WITTMAN. Do you believe in using that case law to define what is true extremism in that—in that understood definition? How do you believe then that should be implemented?

Should it be through each individual commander or should it be through a central nonpartisan authority? How do you think—how do you think you actually apply that?

The CHAIRMAN. And you have slightly less than 10 seconds to answer.

Mr. BERRY. It should be implemented very carefully through, I would prefer, a nonpartisan central authority.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mm-hmm. Very good. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Norcross is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing and for gathering the information that we are not always aware of, and thanking those who serve.

And as many people have mentioned, 99.9 percent isn't the problem. But we do understand that one person can create some tremendous issues and problems.

I grew up much of the time in Tennessee, and I remember going to an amusement park called Rebel Railroad where we had the flag and we were just thinking, as young children not knowing, you know, this is about South and pride. Well, as an adult, we learned something very different.

You speak about removing symbols across the military, in particular, the Confederate flag. Why is that important? Give us a historical perspective—here we are in 2021—why that’s a problem.

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you for the question.

The Southern Poverty Law Center believes that monuments and symbols to the Confederacy are harmful and prevent us from moving forward together as a country.

As you know, the Confederacy stood against the Union and, in addition, the Confederacy was formed to protect and prolong the inhumane institution of chattel slavery in the United States.

We believe that it is wrong for a military that embraces all people to hold up as heroes those who fought to continue the enslavement of African Americans.

Mr. NORCROSS. Can you touch base on the original reason why many of these were adopted in terms of trying to bring the country back as one? And why is it the right time now to remove these?

Ms. BROOKS. Well, I guess I would—say thank you for the question—and as we understand it, it’s important to put into context the lost cause narrative, and as it—as the South was being—well, former Confederate States were being brought back into the Union, it was important that they be able to see them—their efforts and themselves as heroic.

And so that began this kind of—this lost cause narrative and creating heroes out of people who fought on the side of the Confederacy. Now is the time because we understand, we have a better and fuller understanding of our history. We’re coming to grapple with our history and our past, reckon with that past, so that we can move forward together.

It is always the right time to recognize history in its fullest sense and bring together all people. As Mr. Berry has said, all people and all opinions should be valued.

When you have Confederate leaders or so-called Confederate leaders venerated in public space, it is literally a slap in the face to the ancestors of African Americans who were enslaved by these—by these same folks. So I would say that.

Mr. NORCROSS. Thank you for your answer. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Scott is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I do want to point out that, you know, kind of the concern, I think, from our side and with respect to the lady at the Southern Poverty Law Center, Southern Poverty Law Center put out an extremist file on Ben Carson and one of the key reasons that—my understanding that you did that is because of his [audio interference].

The CHAIRMAN. I’m sorry, Austin, you’re kind of breaking up a little bit. Can you try that again?

Mr. SCOTT. Yes. So the Southern Poverty Law Center put out a file on Ben Carson, naming Ben [audio interference].

The CHAIRMAN. Sorry. Zoom is not cooperating. We’ll have to try to get Mr. Scott back in just a minute so I’ll go to the next—hey, Austin, we’re going to have to try to work on your connection here because it’s going in and out.

So I'm going to move on to Ms. Stefanik. I'll take the next Republican on the list. Ms. Stefanik is recognized for 5 minutes and we'll try to get Mr. Scott back.

Elise, are you with us?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Well, strike two.

Mr. DesJarlais, are you on?

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Let me unmute now. Am I on?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, we got you. You are recognized for 5 minutes. Please go ahead.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think I may be going in the same direction that Mr. Scott was but trying to zero in—zero in on how we're defining extremism, which is, as we know, a very subjective term in this discussion.

I guess I would like to look a little further into some of the opinions of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Ms. Brooks, is it true that the American Family Association, the Family Research Council, and the American College of Pediatricians have all been labeled extremist hate groups by your organization?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you, sir. Yes, that is true, and I will just review, again, the definition for hate group. It's an organization that puts out statements of principles by its leaders that denigrate and malign an entire group of people based on their identity characteristics.

It is not about being anti—just simply anti-LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] but it's about going out of your way to vilify segments of the population. I would also want to, for the record—

[Simultaneous speaking]

Ms. BROOKS [continuing]. Earlier—

The CHAIRMAN. I'm sorry. Go ahead, Ms. Brooks. Finish your thought.

Ms. BROOKS. I just want to correct that we never—the Southern Poverty Law Center never listed VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] or the American Legion. That assertion appeared as satire in a military satire blog known as Duffel Blog.

The CHAIRMAN. And if we could suspend Mr. DesJarlais' time for just 1 second, I really want to emphasize that point. That's why we have these hearings is to try to get to the facts. Then we can debate what to do with them. But we can't be throwing out a bunch of misinformation. That's why we try to have these hearings to get to that point.

I'm sorry, Mr. DesJarlais. Your—it is your time. Go ahead.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. And I agree. Thanks for clarifying. That's a relief to know that the American Legion and VFW were not named.

But, you know, the American College of Pediatricians, if they're going to be thrown in as a hate group or violent extremism, certainly, that doesn't fit the definition Mr. Berry gave. Is this because of their designation on their views on transgender youth receiving hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you for the question. It's not entirely based on just that alone, sir. I'm happy to get the research to you that we used to identify them as a hate group.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay, let's move on. How about conservative activist David Horowitz, the president of the conservative think tank David Horowitz Freedom Center? You've designated him as a hate group?

Ms. BROOKS. Yes, sir. It's—let me just point out that oftentimes people point out groups that sound patriotic, sound religious, when in actuality those very groups who use these names or these titles also promote very hateful rhetoric.

Let me clear up the radical traditionalist Catholicism group that's named as a hate group because we're often thrown that—

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Well, actually, let's not do that now, if you don't mind. Let's not do that because we have limited time.

How about Antifa? Has your group designated them as a hate group?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you, sir. No. The definition for the Southern Poverty Law Center, again, is about hateful rhetoric that maligns an entire group of people based on who they are.

It's important to note that Antifa is not—is a political group that's loosely organized. They do not target any particular group or marginalize any particular group in—in that manner that's consistent with our hate group list.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. And I would argue that the American College of Pediatricians has not either, and the whole point of this discussion is, you know, I agree with my colleague, Mr. Wittman.

As we're—as we're looking to sources to decide what violent extremism is, we have to be very careful, and when I see groups like Southern Poverty Law Center picking and choosing, deciding what they accept is normal and abnormal and using them as a source to define what's acceptable in our military, I think that that creates a deep problem for moving forward and we need to show consistency, because some of this is opinion and it's not backed.

There's no room for violent extremism in our military whatsoever. It seems like we all are in agreement on that. But as we have this hearing to explore what these definitions should be, I think we need to use sources that are fair across the board.

And violent extremism, as defined by Mr. Berry, was very good. But I think your organization kind of cherry picks and chooses.

You have all right-wing groups listed as hate groups. You have no left-wing groups, to my knowledge, and we need consistency and bipartisanship as we move forward in this.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. BROOKS. May I, sir?

The CHAIRMAN. Please.

Ms. BROOKS. The Center's listing does not require acts of violence to land on the hate group list. I just want to be clear. And we are in complete agreement with Mr. Berry's definition about violent extremists.

You should not conflate the Southern Poverty Law Center's hate census with a list of violent extremist groups, as it says on the website.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Brown is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me start by just really thanking you for elevating this issue to a full committee hearing. I think important is so—the issue is so important, and regardless of what percentage of the Armed Forces, you know, subscribe or are members in extremist organizations, the fact that there is one, I think, justifies this hearing at this level. So thank you.

I appreciate this hearing. The topic is extremism in the military. I think we can all agree that violent activity is already prohibited under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

I think most of us will agree and accept that participating in extremist organizations is also prohibited by most service regulations, participating meaning things like attending speeches or fundraising or recruiting.

But my concern goes to membership, and I recognize that there are First Amendment issues. I recognize that service members enjoy constitutional rights. But I also know that those rights are applied differently in the military context.

First Amendment, for example, I cannot engage in political speech when I'm in uniform. Fourth Amendment, a commander has much more latitude in searching my living area on an installation than the local police do my private residence in Bowie, Maryland.

The Sixth Amendment, the Supreme Court has said that right to jury trial doesn't apply.

And my concern with membership is twofold. One, if I'm a member of an extremist organization, membership alone serves to undermine the morale, the readiness, and unit cohesion, if not even the discipline of that unit.

Membership is also a concern of mine because if I'm a member of an extremist organization, I now get to benefit from the skills training, the leadership training, the—that the military provides.

So my question is really straightforward and I'll start with Ms. Brooks. Does the First Amendment protect membership in an extremist organization for a member of the military?

Ms. BROOKS. Yes, Mr. Brown, and thank you for your leadership on the Confederate monuments issue. We appreciate that.

Yes, they do have first First Amendment protections, as the current prohibition against activities are stated kind of in military regulations, it really—it really falls on whether or not they're engaged actively or actively participating and acting on that membership.

As you know, someone could sign up on a listserv and become a member. So it really does require their active participation.

Mr. BROWN. And, Dr. Cronin, your thoughts on that?

Ms. CRONIN. Yes, sir. I agree completely about the description of the limitations to rights that other people do not experience. So if you're in the military you do have some limitations upon your First Amendment rights. But the kind of concerning activity that I'm talking about involves advocating the overthrow of our government.

And so groups that advocate the overthrow of our government, anyone who is involved in membership of those groups cannot also be protecting the U.S. Constitution under their oath.

So, to me, it seems to me that there's a very clear—a contradiction there, and Congress needs to step into that part of this story.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. Berry.

Mr. BERRY. Yes, sir, Mr. Congressman.

Membership in an organization alone establishes a strong presumption, right? And I think the question then is, what does that—what does that organization of which someone is a member, what do they actually espouse or advocate, and as I've stated before, if they're advocating violence to accomplish their objectives, then the person who's a member has no place in our military. If they're merely advocating ideas, then I think that becomes a slippery slope.

We don't want to punish thoughts, ideas, or beliefs. We want to punish conduct, and that's what our courts have consistently held.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, with what little time I have left, I'll yield it back. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

We're going to give Mr. Scott another try. Austin, are you with us?

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman. I hope this is better. I'm actually on the WiFi now instead of a digital connection. Can you hear me?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, we can. We got you.

Mr. SCOTT. Okay.

So one is I do think that this is an important hearing. But I don't think the problem is as big as some people make it out to be. But it's kind of, you know, a little bit of poison in the water is too much poison in the water, in my opinion.

My concern is, you know, what—what is the definition of extremism. And as I was saying earlier, and this goes to Ms. Brooks with the Southern Poverty Law Center, your organization posted an extremist file on Dr. Ben Carson. Can you tell me why the Southern Poverty Law Center labeled Ben Carson as an extremist?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you for the question. Yes, the Southern Poverty Law Center didn't initially identify Mr. Carson and placed him on our extremist list. As you actually probably also know, we removed him from the extremist list.

Mr. SCOTT. With all due respect, ma'am, you didn't necessarily apologize to him. You put out a list of his statements that, you know, he said marriage is between a man and a woman.

It's a well established pillar of society and no group, be they gays, be they North American Man Boy Association group, be they people who they believe in—it doesn't matter what they are. They don't get to change the definition.

I mean, he—but that—he believes that—he believes things that you disagree with is the bottom line. Is that correct?

Ms. BROOKS. Again, I could just point you back to our hate group lists. So let me just be clear, that—that I appreciate—we appreciate being a part of this hearing as we are discussing the rise in white supremacy and white nationalism within the U.S. military.

We are not here to debate the range of the Southern Poverty Law Center's hate group lists. If we are focusing—

Mr. SCOTT. Madam, with all due—

Ms. BROOKS. If we're focusing in on violent extremists in the military, let us then do that and not take the opportunity to—

Mr. SCOTT. Ma'am—

Ms. BROOKS [continuing]. Have hits at the Center.

Mr. SCOTT. Ma'am, with all due respect, ma'am, the definition of the hearing is extremism in the armed services is my understanding, not white supremacy in the armed services. It is that correct, Mr. Chairman? It is extremism in the armed services?

The CHAIRMAN. That is correct, and I do want to make one thing clear. I invited Ms. Brooks here. We invited Ms. Brooks here to get her perspective.

I want to make it 100 percent clear we are not designating the Southern Poverty Law Center as being in charge of deciding what to do about extremism in the military.

We're taking their viewpoints, as we take many viewpoints. They're not going to be running things or all of their decisions are not what's going to be implemented.

So that why they're here is to have that conversation to lend their expertise on the subject of extremism and—

Mr. SCOTT. Fair enough. Fair enough, Mr. Chairman. I'll move on to another subject, and this is just something that I point out to the committee as one of my primary concerns that I'm seeing in—not just in the military but in a lot of areas.

You know, someone who, maybe they posted something when they were angry 10 years past, and then that today is being used as a reason to terminate them from their positions.

And so I just—again, I think we need to be very careful that we don't take an individual statement or an individual action that someone takes unless that action creates harm or actually encompasses violence and cancel somebody's military career and attack their character with an individual statement or an individual action that somebody took or posted online.

And I'm—again, I'm very concerned that we're seeing people through all walks of society lose their jobs and other things simply because of a Facebook post or some other posts that, you know, was made when somebody was mad.

And so with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll yield the remainder of my time and thank you for giving me the opportunity to get to a better WiFi connection.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you, and I thank those perspectives, and this is precisely why we're having this hearing, and I am very sympathetic with the remarks that Mr. Scott just made. We're doing this because this isn't easy. That's exactly why we're doing this.

Yet, without question, extremism on the right and extremism on the left has risen up and become an—become violent in both instances and created problems, okay.

At the same time, yes, you have people who then dumb down extremism to be that person disagrees with me, therefore, I'm going to call them an extremist and try to make sure that they don't get a chance to speak.

Okay, and how we walk between those two things in our society right now is really difficult and it is, clearly, impacting our military.

Clearly, whether you want to say, you know, you come from the perspective there's too much extremism in the military. White supremacy is rampant. It's making it difficult for diversity. Or you

want to come from the other side and say that people are—the thought police are out there. You can't say or do anything.

No matter which side you come at, you should acknowledge this is a problem for the good order and discipline in our military that we need to figure out how to better handle, and that is what I'm hoping we'll be able to accomplish today.

I have Ms. Sherrill next on the list.

Ms. SHERRILL. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and this has been a very interesting hearing and, certainly, I've not agreed with every member but I do appreciate those who expressed their opinions respectfully and thoughtfully, as we generally do in this committee. It's something that I most like about this committee, compared to some of my other ones.

I just want to talk a little bit and address something quickly since we are talking about how to handle this, and truth, and want to make sure that we are dealing with the appropriate facts.

I'm afraid that Mr. Berry might have left a false impression about some of the Army training. I think that, and he's referred to it about three times in saying that the Army had a doctrine against Catholics or evangelicals.

I think what he's talking about is a slide that was used several years ago at a briefing for the Army Reserves Unit Pennsylvania, and I know it was widely reported.

But I do just want to make sure people on this committee are aware that an Army spokesperson said that the person who created and presented that slideshow was not actually a subject matter expert, that there was a complaint about it.

Upon receiving a single complaint, that person apologized and deleted the slide, that the slide itself was not produced by the Army. It's not part of policy or doctrine. The Army has stated that, and the Archdiocese also said that that training seems to have been an isolated incident.

So, certainly, it should never have happened but it is not an Army policy or doctrine, as far as I understand it, to put those groups out or compare those groups to hate groups.

I think—I think also, when we're looking at this, I agree with the chairman, and I actually agree with the majority of people who've spoken today that we have to be very, very careful about what we call extremism and how we define it.

But we also—it is the military and we do have to make sure that as people are taking an oath to our Constitution that they can uphold that oath. And, certainly, there are groups, various groups, that would undermine the beliefs of this Nation, the beliefs of people in this country, and the values enshrined in the Constitution, and you really cannot serve in our military if you hold beliefs that really would support undermining our Constitution.

So there are, of course, various military regulations and directives that do place limits on service members' rights, such as Article 88, contempt towards officials; Article 92, failure to obey an order or regulation; Article 133, conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman; and Article 134.

So we do know that when you join the military you have rights, but you also have responsibilities that you need to uphold for our Nation.

I think this has been an important hearing, and I also agree with those—I'm not sure; I suspect that some of the extremist views are not widely held in our military. But it does seem by some reporting that they are growing, that—up from around 20 percent of military members for whom we see evidence of extremist views now up in the 30s, and I certainly think we do need more information to understand the threat.

However, in speaking to the SECDEF [Secretary of Defense] and speaking to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, their opinion is, and I think Representative Scott said it, you know, just a little poison in the water is too much poison in the water.

So we certainly have to make sure we're rooting that out. And I guess with that in mind, there's been a lot of discussion about those with extremist views going on special social media platforms or media outlets, particularly as they are banned from more popular platforms like Twitter or Facebook.

So these extremist platforms are surely part of the problem as they facilitate an indoctrination process into extremist ideology that can culminate in violence, and the military has been able to ban service members from accessing certain social media platforms due to national security concerns related to data being leaked to our adversaries.

Do you—I'd like to ask our panelists, do you see a benefit in the military banning service members from accessing certain social and media platforms favored by some of our extremist groups on national security grounds, and can you discuss in some detail, if you would, what you see as the First Amendment issues?

Because I do think these are thorny problems and I do appreciate the concerns presented today about First Amendment issues. Thank you.

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you for the question. I think that that's an interesting, interesting proposition. Certainly, as you know, there have been platforms or there are platforms that currently exist for the express purpose of advancing violent extremism.

So I think that that's very, very interesting and for the committee to further contemplate or the military leadership to contemplate whether or not that might be a line in the sand if a platform was created for that express purpose.

Mr. LANGEVIN [presiding]. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mr. Gallagher is recognized next.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Thank you. Thank you.

You know, honestly, I would say, based on my own experience in the Marine Corps, it would shock me to learn that extremism, whether it's Salafi jihadism or neo-Nazism, is endemic in the military.

And, you know, when I was down range I served in diverse units and all that really mattered, particularly in a combat zone, was whether you as a Marine could do the job.

In other words, the Marine Corps seemed not to judge people by the color of their skin but, rather, by actions that you could actually quantify, like pull ups, marksmanship, or, you know, a general ability to endure pain, which is a key part of being a Marine.

So I guess—I guess I could be wrong. I guess the Marine Corps could be filled with extremists on a level that I did not appreciate

before. But we have no DOD witnesses here to help us make sense of that and I have not seen data from any of our panelists that would help me make sense of this.

We seem to lack an agreed upon baseline, in fact, from which we could even measure an increase or decrease in extremism. We can't even agree on a definition of extremism. And in the absence of data and in the absence of DOD witnesses, I fear we're left making somewhat wild suppositions based on our ideological priors, which is never a good place to be.

So some recent data that are worth paying attention to and that do concern me, last month the Reagan Institute released new polling that shows public trust in the military has declined for the second consecutive year, down from 70 percent in 2018 to 56 percent today.

So confidence in the military is down amongst all subgroups including men, women, older and younger Americans, and veterans, and in particular, since 2018, confidence in the military is down 17 points for Republicans and 19 points for independents.

So while we can all agree that violent extremism of any kind has no place in our Nation and certainly no place in the military, I am increasingly concerned that any popular perceptions that the military is taking sides in political disputes or targeting one particular political faction or the other could exacerbate this trend of growing lack of confidence in the military.

Moreover, it is a matter of fact that there's an active propaganda campaign being prosecuted by the Chinese Communist Party right now attempting to portray our entire country as an evil racist hell-scape with no authority to lecture them on human rights.

And so I want to be sensitive about playing into our competitors' hands on that front and sensitive to anything that might undermine our ability to fight and win wars in the future.

And with that in mind, Mr. Berry, could you please elaborate on what, if any, long-term danger you see posed by the loss of public confidence in the military? What could be some of the consequences in terms of military readiness, for example?

Mr. BERRY. Thank you, Congressman, for the question.

I mean, quite simply, the danger is if people lose trust and confidence in the military, then America's mothers and fathers stop sending their sons and daughters to join the military.

And, you know, as someone who has served, I and you both probably recognize the old saying that the military is a young man's game.

Notwithstanding our ability to endure pain, it is very much a young person's game and we have to have young people who are willing to step up, make selfless service and sacrifice a part of their lives and to be willing to, you know, to sacrifice many of the freedoms that young people in this country enjoy in order to serve our great Nation.

And if they start hearing the message that either that the military has become a victim of partisan politics or that it has become overly infiltrated with extremists and radicals, then they'll—they will—they'll stop joining.

And one of—one more threat to that is simply telling people of—entire classes of citizens that they're unwelcome to serve in the

military because of their beliefs and—or because of, you know, their background.

So I think that's the real danger to readiness is people will stop joining the military. We're going to start to see our numbers plummet.

Mr. GALLAGHER. And in the few seconds I have left, Dr. Cronin, is there an obvious fair data set we could draw upon to get at this thorny issue? What makes the most sense, in your opinion?

Ms. CRONIN. Not yet, and that is one of the main reasons why I think this is a very important hearing.

And let me just say that my many years of serving at the National War College also gave me considerable insight and considerable loyalty to the military and concern to make sure that their image within the American public is not undermined by things like the many indictments that are coming out against current and former military who were involved on January 6th.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Thank you. I yield my 3 seconds.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Gallagher.

Ms. Houlahan is now recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for joining us today.

I have a couple of questions and I do want to associate myself with Mr. Gallagher's remarks about the importance of data, and I hope that by having this sort of a conversation, this kind of hearing, and exposing the fact that we need to all be, you know, singing from the same hymnal and understanding what the data is, that we end up with, as a consequence, having a way to measure what matters, which is whether or not this is an issue that we can get our teeth around and work to address.

My first question is for Dr. Cronin, and like many on the committee and like you as well, I am disturbed about the disruptive nature of our—of disinformation which definitely has a corrosive effect on this democracy and on our service members.

And in addition to being a veteran, I'm also a former teacher, and so I believe that we need to invest in foundational literacy but also in functional literacy, which includes being able to figure out what is fact and what isn't fact and to be able to ask critical questions about sourcing.

So I'm trying to understand what the possibilities are for implementing an annual training of digital literacy and cyber citizenship for our service members as an opportunity to teach our forces how to analyze and evaluate sources to determine whether that information is accurate or if it has been manipulated.

I was hoping you could share what other types of training methods the DOD might be able to benefit from to better educate our service members and better equip them with the tools to be able to be responsible cyber citizens.

Ms. CRONIN. Yes, digital literacy is a serious national security issue now, and we need to increase their ability to be discriminating when they're on digital platforms and on social media.

So I think this is an extremely important part of the answer. Right now, there's very little training except with respect to certain specific types of data. We spent a lot of time understanding what

ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] was doing and trying to look at the links between what radical Islamic jihadists were doing.

And yet, we haven't looked at the kinds of things that can be concerning when it comes to the same sorts of recruitment techniques that the jihadists were using.

Now, I'm not drawing a parallel between them and the problem we're talking about now, only about the means and the digital means are very—I think, a very serious vulnerability because they're undermining, I think, the strength of our force.

Ms. HOULAHAN. And so are there any other sort of training methods that you can think of that are maybe being effectively used in other spaces that we could ask for and implement in the DOD?

Ms. CRONIN. Yes, ma'am. There are very good civic digital training methods that are being put together in a number of different—there's the New America Foundation has a new initiative on this subject.

We can also go to our allies. The Scandinavians are extraordinarily good at digital literacy. If we were to talk to the Finns or the Swedes or the Norwegians and the Baltic States, we would really learn a lot about practices that we could help train our members with.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Really interesting and I appreciate that, and my office will definitely take a look at that.

And with my remaining time I have a question for Mr. Berry, a follow-up question. I really appreciated you doing—spending some time going over the language and references in the UCMJ regarding violence and various articles.

I'm not a lawyer, just a veteran. And I really appreciated that you said that we should have good working definitions in the UCMJ.

But in my cursory understanding and in taking a look, I saw articles regarding mutiny and sedition and conduct unbecoming, but I didn't see any specific references to domestic terrorism.

To your knowledge, does the UCMJ refer specifically to domestic terrorism? If so, in what ways, and if so, why not, do you think?

Mr. BERRY. Thank you, Congresswoman.

I don't believe the UCMJ explicitly references the phrase domestic terrorism. However, that is not to say that there are not adequate measures that our military prosecutors can use to get to any alleged acts of domestic terror.

We can actually incorporate Federal criminal offenses that are defined by Congress for purposes of, you know, DOJ [Department of Justice] prosecution, et cetera. Those can actually be incorporated into a military prosecution if—you know, if the elements are satisfied and if there's not a—you know, a specific UCMJ provision that addresses that particular crime or alleged crime.

So I guess the one—I know—

Ms. HOULAHAN. Is it—just to be clear, because I only have 20 more seconds, is it your position that because it's not there that there are other things that cover it?

And I just am having a hard time reconciling the fact that things are there for a purpose. I was—I was raised to understand contracts exist so that, you know, you have a set of understandings be-

tween you of what is under contract and what is signed. Are the——

Mr. LANGEVIN. I'm sorry. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. HOULAHAN. No problem. I appreciate it, Mr. Chairman. I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Gaetz is now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GAETZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I represent the district that has the highest concentration of Active Duty military in the country and, respectfully, it is on their behalf that I would categorize this hearing as total nonsense.

Today, the Chinese Communist Party is building aircraft carriers and jets that every member of this committee knows threaten to close or eliminate the capability gap. North Korea is perfecting the ability to strike the United States with nuclear weapons. Cartels are hunting the next trafficking routes. And here we are hunting, in the words of one of the witnesses, memes and keywords.

Today, the House Armed Services Committee is engaged in a review of constitutionally protected expression by our troops. How utterly weak of us. No wonder the Chinese Communist Party continues to gain ground.

The entire purpose of this hearing is not what the chairman said. It is to gaslight the targeting of U.S. military patriots who do not share pre-approved politics. This is not about extremism.

It is not about white supremacy. It is about woke supremacy. It is about converting the military from an apolitical institution to an institution controlled by the political left.

Today, instead of working together, we are gathered having a hearing designed to tear us apart, to try to get us to view our fellow countrymen and women who protect us as somehow evil or dangerous or a cancer to be exorcised.

U.S. military is the most diverse organization in our entire country. Men and women, Christians and Jews, Hindus, Muslims, queer and straight, every last one of them patriots with a united common purpose to protect and defend the United States of America.

As we have noted, Secretary Austin said 99 percent of our service members believe in the oath that they swore to and I believe that, too.

But there is a difference between weeding out bad apples who should be removed from the ranks and using the charge of extremism to stigmatize different opinions, and, increasingly, extremism is a euphemism the Democrats are using when they're talking about conservatives, Republicans, and the group they hate most, Trump supporters.

As one of our witnesses today we have a member of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This group called the Family Research Council a hate group for its opposition to same-sex marriages.

The SPLC's designation of others caused a deranged leftist to try to shoot up the Family Research Council's headquarters. The Southern Poverty Law Center is a hate group. They'd even smear Dr. Ben Carson.

So today we're literally being lectured on extremism by a hate group and other witnesses who are looking to hawk their books.

Recently, members of our Armed Forces have been threatened with being chartered or chaptered out or detained by DHS for possessing hate imagery.

Does having a Pepe the Frog meme somewhere on your phone make you a dangerous extremist? Is it now included in the list of hate symbols distributed right alongside neo-Nazi symbols? How ludicrous.

But I guess it's to be expected. After all, the left never finds blame in its own ranks. The FBI would rather investigate garage polls than Antifa. Firebombing Federal courthouse is small fries compared to Jussie Smollett.

In 2019, West Point concluded an investigation into whether or not cadets were making white power hand gestures during the Army-Navy football game.

It turns out they were not. They were playing something called the circle game, but they were doxxed anyway, and after an investigation was concluded the okay gesture was added to the ADL's [Anti-Defamation League's] hate on display database.

How long until Make America Great Again hats are considered an extremist symbol? How long until Catholic or pro-life groups or those who believe in two genders are too extreme for the ruling woketopians?

Today is about nothing more than cancel culture coming for our military and it is disgusting. It is about power and we ought to tread carefully, because our fellow Americans do not take kindly to this type of tyranny.

I have no questions for the witnesses. This hearing is a joke, and I yield back.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Well, I respectfully disagree with the gentleman strongly. I think this is an important hearing and a fact-finding hearing that we that we need to have. But the gentleman certainly is entitled to his opinion.

With that, has Ms. Slotkin—has Ms. Slotkin returned?

[No response.]

Mr. LANGEVIN. Okay. If not, then Ms. Escobar is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. And I want to just say a couple of words in response to my colleague who really just tried to demean the purpose of this hearing. I'm sure he's no longer on.

But I—and I also want to say to my—to some of my Republican colleagues—

Mr. GAETZ. I'm still here. I'm still on.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Sir, I have the floor. I'd also like to say to some of my other Republican colleagues who expressed concern, legitimate concern, about how we do this that I'm with you and I do think it is really important that we do this carefully and that we do this in a serious way.

You know, violent extremism is not a joke. Many of us personally lived through the consequences of it on January 6th.

My community, El Paso, Texas, lived through it on August 3rd of 2019. This is taking people's lives. It is creating incredible turmoil, and so it's very important that we approach this with the seriousness that it deserves.

And so I—what I'd like to ask Ms. Cronin, you know, we've talked a lot about the absence of data, and when we don't have data then that frequently becomes an excuse for inaction.

And so I really would love just some very specific suggestions from you on how you think we can begin to tackle the absence of the data.

What are some things that Congress can do, some kind of key steps, so that we can really wrap our arms around the depth of the challenge that we have before us and identify opportunities to do better and identify areas where we are really failing?

Ms. CRONIN. Yes, ma'am. I think that the data is the most important question. If we keep ping-ponging back and forth between us as to what we mean and what's the status of the problem, there's no way that you can answer that question unless you have data.

So the kinds of data that the Department of Defense might consider putting into place would be to use the Command Climate Survey, for example, to pull out the data that may relate to this question, to add an additional question to the Command Climate Survey would be another way we could get around it, to add a discharge code that includes extremism among the reasons for discharge.

Right now, it's different for different services. So there isn't any way to really know. The only kind of data that is reported to Congress is data that arises in—you know, of its own. So we don't have—you know, we don't have a way to categorize it and to collect it rigorously.

But those are three ideas that I would have.

Ms. ESCOBAR. And would you—you know, one of the things that I and many of my other colleagues have been working on not just within the services but across the board in government is increasing diversity, because diversity matters.

And, you know, much of domestic terrorism and violent extremism can be rooted and linked back to white nationalism, racism, bigotry.

And so the lack of diversity at the very top of the military, I believe, plays a role, unfortunately, in perpetuating some, you know, the environment where it can flourish.

Do you see a link there? I would love to know your thoughts on that.

Ms. CRONIN. I'm not sure about the link because we don't have the data. I will say that I am very strongly in favor of increasing diversity at the senior ranks within the Department of Defense.

I'm a girl who wanted to join the Navy and there were no opportunities at the time. So that was not a pathway that was open to me. So I think that increasing diversity in the senior levels of our services will help all of us and will help the services as well.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Wonderful. Thank you. I only have about 30 seconds left so I will yield back, Mr. Chairman. But I will just once again say that I really do appreciate colleagues on both sides of the aisle who are willing to tackle this issue with the seriousness that it deserves.

I yield back.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Bacon is now recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Ms. Cronin, Ms. Brooks, Mr. Berry for being here today and the discussion we're having.

My question revolves around this. First of all, we should make clear, and we do—we need to do it repeatedly—that white nationalism is repugnant and some of the views of groups where they're embracing anarchy or anti-government views are also repugnant.

The way it comes across to me, though, the last 3 or 4 months, when we're talking about the military and extremism that that is the only focus or that's the way it's perceived by many and by myself as well.

Are we being selectively blind to other areas of extremism? That's going to be my question. And I'll just give a couple examples.

Just recently, we had two soldiers arrested for giving information to ISIS to aid ISIS in attacking our forces. So they're under arrest and will probably be court-martialed.

We see some of the worst cases of violence in military garrisons from Islamic extremists. We have had a whole year of Antifa [audio interference] in many our cities. I just don't hear those aspects being talked about now.

So my question is, are we being too selective in this discussion? Are we ignoring other areas of extremism?

Thank you.

Ms. CRONIN. Mr. Bacon, I've studied extremism for decades and I've studied jihadist extremism. I've studied anti-technology extremism, left-wing extremism as well as right-wing extremism and white nationalism and white supremacy and all of those things.

So it is true that the word extremism includes more than just anti-government or a white supremacist or white nationalist extremism. I think that one of the key reasons why we need a good strong definition that is passed through Congress and that can be applied by our military and that is fair in including the kinds of actions that extremists advocate, that would help our ability to include all extremists, not just a selective category of one or another.

Mr. BACON. Thank you.

And, Ms. Brooks and Mr. Berry, I'll give you a chance to answer too if you'd like.

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you, Mr. Bacon.

I would point the committee to the executive summary from the Office of Director of National Intelligence agreeing that there's not enough sufficient data.

But I will point that the military itself, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, issued a report on March 1, "Domestic Violent Extremism Poses Heightened Threat in 2021."

Though they recognize that there are a range of ideologies that animate extremism, they identified racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism and militia violent extremists as presenting the greatest threat.

Now, this is—this is from the FBI, Department of Homeland Security, and Central Intelligence. So and the—with the limited data that we have, we have the report or survey results from the Military Times last year that reported over 50 percent of service mem-

bers of color stated they witnessed racist or white supremacist behavior within the ranks and to note that only a half a percentage point identified Islamic terrorism or al-Qaida or other foreign terrorist organizations as an ongoing problem.

But you're absolutely right. We're looking at extremism writ large. It just so happens to be, and the military agrees, that the greatest threat, the most present threat, is from racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists.

Mr. BACON. Let me just respond to that, and I appreciate your feedback, Ms. Brooks, because I'm not going to deny there's issues here and we should be clear that it's—and oppose it and call what it—what it is. It's repugnant.

But, yet, most service men murdered in acts of extremism has not been from that. It's been from radical Islamism within the ranks or from the outside attacking people on base.

So to say that when you look at fatalities and murders, that it's not the case within the military ranks.

Mr. Berry, would you like to follow up at all?

Mr. BERRY. Yes, sir, thank you.

Extremism is a cancer, right, period, and, at least as I've defined it earlier, and I've never heard anyone say, "I'm okay with a little bit of cancer," or "I'm okay with getting—you know, with one type of cancer but not the other."

And so I think that is part of the problem is that when we're trying to eradicate extremism, we should not be picking winners and losers in this effort to eradicate true extremism from our military.

Mr. BACON. With that, I have seconds—7 seconds left. Mr. Chair, I'll yield back.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Bacon.

Ms. Slotkin is now recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Thank you. I appreciate everyone putting this hearing together, and, you know, when I was at the Pentagon, one of the things that really distinguished the American military from lots of other militaries that we would partner with across the world is we were willing to actually look at ourselves and reflect.

We did after-action reviews. We criticized ourselves internally if there was something that we didn't do right or on the mark. And so I think it's important and a healthy thing for us to look at this issue, particularly given the clearly high proportion of those who came inside the Capitol during the attack that had some sort of military background. I don't think that's cherry-picking to just look at it. That's just straight numbers and data.

Although I will say our data on almost anything else is, indeed, really poor and it is hard to have a conversation about this when we don't have the data and, frankly, we don't have the Department of Defense here to talk through these issues.

And I would offer, Mr. Chairman, that if we're going to talk about them we shouldn't talk without them, and that we should be given them—giving them the opportunity to talk about the breadth of the problem once they've had a full, you know, chance to review it.

Secretary Austin has been excellent on these issues, and I think it's super important that he's talking about his own personal expe-

rience where he personally helped root out, you know, a nest of skinheads that were in his unit.

So I would just put that as a long commentary. I would also note that in the sort of 20 years since 9/11 we have worked very hard to try and identify any service members that might have links to foreign terrorist organizations.

I mean, we have hunted folks down as much as we were able because of such a risk to the force. It's such a risk to our country to have that, and we should put in at least the same level of effort as we were on that threat, which, while it did happen, was relatively small, and I think it—I hope it's the same in this case.

I guess I would ask Ms. Cronin, you know, you've been—you've mentioned this before, but walk us through what the Defense Department should be tracking in order to deal with the threat. I don't think that a lot of data exists out there. What should they be tracking?

Ms. CRONIN. Well, one of the difficulties, Ms. Slotkin, that you've highlighted in comparing the chasing down of foreign terrorists and those associated with foreign FTOs [foreign terrorist organizations] and those that would be associated with organizations in the United States is that there is no objective consideration of what organizations within the United States are beyond the pale for the military.

And it's very difficult for the military to know exactly how to consistently, across all the services, execute a good policy in the way that they did with respect to foreign terrorist organizations because there is—there's no identifying domestic terrorist organizations.

Now, I was responsible at the Congressional Research Service for tracking that FTO list. I understand the difficulties of that list. I also understand what the difficulties are in developing a domestic list.

But I think we have to begin somewhere. Those organizations that are most advocating for the overthrow of our government should already be on some sort of a list that the military has which is legally against the law for them to chase, and that doesn't exist right now.

So that would be the first place to start to give them some clear markers that help them to respond in a way that is—that is consistent and fair to our military.

Ms. SLOTKIN. And if I could, and this is where my life on the Homeland Security Committee in a hearing we had this morning is colliding with the work that we're doing here.

Mr. Berry, you said that you had concerns about a list. Does it not make sense to take those organizations that we identify as using violence to further their political goals as at least a starting point of groups to look at within the service members?

Mr. BERRY. Thank you, Congresswoman.

Yes, it, obviously, makes sense to identify any group that advocates violence. Again, you know, my earlier comment was simply meant to convey that we should be criminalizing conduct, though, not their, you know, their thoughts or their beliefs because that's nearly impossible to do.

But if a group—

Ms. SLOTKIN. But if someone affiliates with a group that has—that has declared very clearly that they believe in using violence to further their political goals, not a—short of violence I agree with you, right.

If someone is angry with their government, if someone has strong views about, frankly, about other people but they stop short of advocating violence, I understand it.

I see my time is up but—and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Thank you.

Mr. Waltz is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WALTZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to be clear from the start that I certainly agree and associate myself with many of the comments. All forms of extremism are repugnant. Whether it is communism, fascism, white extremism, Islamic extremism, they're repugnant. They should be rooted from the ranks.

But there has been a lot of discussion about data here and what evidence we have that this issue is a significant issue within the United States military, and I am struggling—I have yet to hear any data, any evidence aside from anecdotal reporting and one survey.

So, Ms. Brooks, you stated earlier—you said that we are here today—you're here today to discuss the rise of white extremism within the military.

So I want to be clear. Do you have data that shows that white extremism is on the rise within the United States military?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you, sir. Yes, the research on—the Southern Poverty Law Center's research, other researchers, journalists, have data that moves beyond anecdotal.

There are some clear patterns as to when we've seen historical rise in white nationalism or white supremacy within the military. We had one peak post the Vietnam War and again 9/11, and we are seeing it once again. And so it's—

Mr. WALTZ. So, Ms. Brooks, I'm sorry. In the interest of time, what numbers? Give me some numbers.

Ms. BROOKS. It's in a range. I said it's in a—

Mr. WALTZ. How many? What services?

Ms. BROOKS. It's in a range.

Mr. WALTZ. Is it in the Army, Navy, Air Force?

The CHAIRMAN. I'm sorry. Mr. Waltz, she's attempting. Give her just a second there. Go ahead.

Mr. WALTZ. Okay. Sure.

Ms. BROOKS. It's in the written testimony, sir.

So, I mean, I referenced the Atomwaffen Division. I referenced the Boogaloo movement and I referenced The Base. And so those would be some concrete examples, recent examples, of infiltration into the military from white supremacists or white nationalists. You'll find more details in our written testimony that's a part of the record.

Mr. WALTZ. No, I've looked over your testimony and, frankly, it looks—I mean, it is—there are some surveys that you make, but I'm looking at some holistic, across the services, across the branches actual numbers, and I'm just not seeing it.

And I want to be open-minded to see it. You know, Ms. Slotkin, who I have enormous respect for, you know, referenced the arrests from January 6th and every one of them should be arrested.

But if we start extrapolating those numbers—look, at the end of the day, we’ve talked a lot about misinformation. This is exactly what the Chinese and the Russians, as we just saw in Anchorage, Alaska, want the world and want us to believe, that our military is systemically racist.

I can tell you from 24 years in the military, our military is there to win wars. It is mission based. It is mission focused. It is—of course, there are flaws that we should always seek to improve. It is merit based and mission focused on who can do the job.

And I was taught and every person of color that I’ve been around receiving the same training teaches you that your skin color is camouflage. It’s just what color of green.

And I can tell you when I was pulling people out of fire, I didn’t care if they were black, white, or brown. The enemy’s bullets, certainly, didn’t care. They just cared that we’re American.

And actually, I didn’t even care if they were American. In many cases, they were Afghan or they were Iraqi. They were fellow soldiers and fellow Marines, fellow sailors, period.

And I would just—for my colleagues and for our witnesses today, this notion is incredibly corrosive—can be incredibly corrosive to morale and to good discipline and order and we need to be incredibly careful.

So my next question is which part of the military regulations that currently exist do you feel are not sufficient and—or not being enforced in terms of extremism?

Ms. Sherrill referenced many of them, so I don’t need to repeat them.

Ms. CRONIN. Mr. Waltz.

Mr. WALTZ. Sure.

Ms. CRONIN. I’m not a lawyer. So I’m not going to be able to reference specific parts of the UCMJ. I will say that we share a desire to make sure that the military is strong in being able to resist any impression that it is being undermined by members within it.

And so if we were to gather much more rigorous data and it were to show that there was very little extremism, that would help us when it came to—

Mr. WALTZ. Right.

Ms. CRONIN [continuing]. And we were studying ourselves in this way, that would help us for making the China connection.

Mr. WALTZ. I fully—and I fully support that effort. I fully support that effort. Just in the interest of time, Mr. Chairman, with the—with the challenges that we’re facing, with ships being built five to one, more being launched into space by the Chinese and the rest of the world combined, 70 percent of our young people are now showing that they’re too obese to come into the military—

The CHAIRMAN. I’m sorry. Your time has expired.

Mr. WALTZ [continuing]. I would—I would—

The CHAIRMAN. Wrap up.

Mr. WALTZ. You get my point. Thank you. Appreciate it, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, I do.

Mr.—I'm sorry. Mrs. Murphy is next. She is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I appreciate this conversation that we're having. And while I recognize and agree with my colleagues that there are a lot of issues that are really important as far as our military is concerned and how well we compete with our near-peer adversaries and I know that we will have time in other hearings to address that, I also understand, having worked at the Department of Defense, that at the core of our strength as a military are the men and women who are willing to serve.

And so having conversations about our force and who's within it is important, and I also, without a doubt, agree that the issue that we're talking about is not reflective of the majority of our service members.

However, there are some issues that are of concern and I think, primarily, we have gone around in circles about what it is we're talking about and what type of extremists.

But for me, what I think we're trying to figure out is are there people who are serving in the U.S. military who, through actions or belief, believe and have acted on a set of extreme ideology that would either interfere with their ability to defend the U.S. Constitution or cause them to defy the civilian orders of their political leaders and, therefore, not be able to carry out their jobs as service members.

And if we are looking at that as the heart of what the issue here is in defining what, you know, actions or extremist ideology that we're concerned about, I'd like to ask the witnesses what—how can we collect data on that type of, you know, characteristic within the force so that we can have a more informed conversation about how widespread this is?

Ms. CRONIN. Well, as I was saying to Ms. Slotkin, I think that a number of things could be done. One of them is to use the Command Climate Survey to get a better sense of what the problem is or is not, and I think we should have a consistent discharge code that can be tracked, and that it's—and what is reported to Congress.

There should be a regular report on this topic that includes other than those cases that naturally rise independently, but also include cases that are reported through, through that discharge process.

So that would be where I would start in any case.

Mrs. MURPHY. Great. And so having talked a bit about getting a better feel and our arms around how widespread the issue is within the active force, I'd like to turn to the veteran force.

In the previous Congress, I worked in a bipartisan way to improve the Transition Assistance Program, which prepares service members for life after the service.

And I believe it was Mr. Brooks who said that the unity of being a part of the military is a way to deter participation in extremist groups. In the—after military service members transition out, they are often disconnected from that unit.

So my question is, are there things that we can do in the transition process that would ensure that there's more resilience within the service member to reject or to be able to not be brought into

some of these extremist groups that then use the skill sets that the U.S. military, using taxpayer dollars, provided these individuals against the U.S. Government?

Ms. BROOKS. Yes, certainly. Thank you for the question.

The Southern Poverty Law Center does ask that the military provide an off ramp and kind of an offboarding as people separate from military service and prepare for reentry.

As you mentioned, sometimes, especially so when someone is involuntarily separated, it's important that there be support services that mitigate against that veteran thinking that they were not valued, and then just kind of separated and thrown out, because it's people like that, veterans like that, that are soft targets or completely vulnerable to violent, hate, and extremist groups.

We would say that there needs to be additional supports across the board, something that is offered to all service members as they—as they reenter civilian life just so—just so that they're better prepared.

Mrs. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mrs. Bice is recognized for 5 minutes.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. I'm sorry. Who do we got next on our side here?

Mr. Franklin is recognized for 5 minutes.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Franklin, are you hearing us?

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Franklin? All right. We got any other—I don't see any other Republicans on this.

Mr. Franklin is—Mr. Franklin? Not with us. I don't see another Republican.

Mrs. Hartzler.

[No response.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Moore, are you with us?

Mr. MOORE. I am with—I am with you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. We have a winner. Go ahead.

[Laughter.]

Mr. MOORE. I have the honor to be with [audio interference].

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Moore, sadly, we have lost you. You have frozen on us. We cannot hear you.

So I'm going to give Mr. Keating a shot and we'll see if we can work out the—

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Are we set, Mr. Chairman? Bill Keating.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, we are, and I apologize, Mr. Moore. We're going to have to get you back later.

Mr. Keating, you're recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for your comments earlier in the hearing so that there's no mistake what this hearing is about, and any attempt to recast it and the reasons for it really aren't on point. So thanks for keeping us on point here.

Let me just deal with something. There's been some back and forth. But there's something I don't think there's any question

about, and that's the fact that these extremist groups have been targeting our military groups at different stages, and they're targeting them, encouraging them to enlist in some instances.

They're targeting recruits. They're targeting active service members. They're targeting retired service members. So that is indisputable. And why are they doing it? They're doing it because so many of these people have military training, so they have that type of training, and it gives their organizations more legitimacy.

So that is one way to, I think, to view this. So there should be no question about the fact there's a problem.

And I'm just going to ask our witnesses, are there ways or suggestions that we have where we can look more carefully at those recruitment measures by these extremist groups? Target, you know, what sites they're going after?

Target what groups of people they might be going after, so we can combat that? Is that a great approach to take during this? Is that something that could be useful?

Ms. CRONIN. Yes, sir, Mr. Keating. I think that is absolutely a wonderful suggestion and something that we should prioritize, because remember that some of the extremist group websites and social media are being accelerated by our adversaries.

And this is proven. This is not a conjecture. So digital literacy is a key element of protecting our force, and keeping on top of that social media and website landscape is a key part of our effectiveness of our force.

If you have an extremist group whose server, and there are several, are actually posted within Russia, that should be a concern for our force.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you. Any other witnesses have any other suggestions in that regard?

Mr. BERRY. Yes, Congressman. Thank you for the question.

I agree that, you know, in a—in a previous duty assignment when I was in the Marine Corps, I actually did what was called information operations, and I think this is an opportunity for us to—we should delegitimize these extremist groups and I think one of the things our government, our society, our military can do is to wage an information operations campaign against extremist groups to delegitimize them in the eyes of the American public and in the eyes of service members.

This is a good opportunity to also send a clear message to our enemies, to America's enemies, that we are a strong nation who will defend our Constitution, and to remind them that the American service member does not fight because he or she hates what is before them but the American service member fights because they love what is behind them.

And that is a harrowing message. If I were an enemy of the United States, I would not want to hear that message. That would scare me.

Mr. KEATING. Interrupt—I'm sorry, sir. But thank you for that.

The other, given the time that's left, is more a comment because I won't—I don't think you're going to be able to respond directly. But also a reason to have this hearing and to have this approach is for greater transparency.

You know, if you look at the inauguration itself, during the inauguration there was a screening all of a sudden after January 6th of some of the Guard and Active Duty members as well that were there.

So that screening was there. Twelve people were removed. There were statements from the Pentagon. Two were identified with extremist groups. The others might have been in some gray area or criminal area.

But the point is this. When we're dealing with this, there should be acknowledgement of why and exactly what standards are there—why someone, for instance, in this instance, was removed from that duty at the inauguration.

And it should be clear to everyone as to why, because we're going to have to deal with issues of trying to get to what criterion we use to discuss it here, what's extremist, what isn't.

The training effectiveness that's in place, is it working? What responses are there, and other members of the military, what are their obligations in reporting themselves? Is it a mandatory obligation or not?

And these are the things we have to discuss at other hearings. I bring that up as a comment. Due to time, I'm going to have to yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for having this hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Keating. Appreciate that.

So here's what we're going to do. Ms. Brooks, first of all, Ms. Brooks needs a couple minute break. You may take that. I'm going to be wrapping some stuff up here. I've got three people left on the list.

We have Mr. Panetta, who is going to be next on our side, Mr. Moore, if we can get the Zoom thing fixed there. We'll then come after—well, Mr. Moore will be next, actually, and then Mr. Panetta. Then I have Ms. Jacobs. Those are the three people I have left who have not asked questions who could ask a question.

I have one—Mr. Rogers and I have to get to a 2:30 classified brief. So if the questioning takes us past that point, those members who are left to ask questions will also have the great honor of wrapping up the hearing at that point.

I do have one quick comment and then one question for Mr. Berry, which I'm going to have to get in now because I have to leave in a couple of minutes.

The most important comment is this hearing is really important to have the discussion, and Mr. Keating, I think, said it quite well. And the terrible thing is we've got demagogues on both sides and, sorry, Mr. Gaetz is the best example of the demagogue problem that we have today. You know, he talks about the fear of, well, people are being silenced. Then he says, we shouldn't be talking about this. Okay. So you just differ on who you want to be silenced.

It's not so much a matter of whether or not silencing people. We're having a hearing to have these discussions and I think my Republican colleagues have contributed a great deal to this discussion, because I am very concerned about overreactions to this.

You know, I will not go into this in great detail because my staff would pull their hair out if I did. But I am concerned that we are—we are targeting people the blink of an eye and shutting them off

from jobs and everything because of something they said, in some cases, 20 years ago.

Okay. You know, that's going on and there's no—there's no reference point. There's no set of rules. There's no structure to that. And it becomes just this, you know, excuse to jam your views down somebody else's throat.

But for the members, and there's only been two that have said this today, that have said there's no point in having this hearing, that's just demagoguery. There is, obviously, 100 percent a point in having this hearing because we have so much disagreement about how to handle this.

This is a problem. This is being discussed. This is being dealt with. This hearing is not creating this issue in the military. Okay? It is an issue in the military right now that is being bitterly disputed by a lot of different people in terms of how to handle it.

I would like us to stop bitterly disputing it and start handling it in an appropriate and fair manner for all concerned, and I think all three of our witnesses have brought crucially important perspectives on how we do that. That's what we're trying to do.

So let's stop shouting at the other side, saying we shouldn't even be talking about this and, furthermore, it's terrible that people are being silenced. That's just idiotic and demagoguery, which we don't need.

Towards that end, I have a question for Mr. Berry. You've talked about how if you can identify people who are advocating violence, basically, we should shut them down. But that does leave open the question what if you have people within the military who are advocating white supremacy, openly advocating white supremacy?

Not from a violent perspective, not saying we should kill anybody, just saying, I think white people are superior and people of color are inferior and we ought to build our society around that principle. How should the military handle that?

Mr. BERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I should start by saying that as a first generation Asian American who served in the military, I am acutely aware that there was a time in our Nation's history when people of my ethnicity were viewed as with suspicion, as potentially disloyal or even as enemies of this country despite our efforts to prove our worth through military service.

And even recent tragic events have now perhaps given me pause to question whether there still might be some who question my Americanness simply because of my ethnicity.

So to your question about what—you know, what should we do when somebody is espousing one of these ideologies? I go back to one of my responses to one of the very first questions, which is, you know, this is a leadership challenge and that this requires good sound leadership principles to address.

And I think one of the questions is, to me, it reminds me a lot of, Mr. Chairman, when you said, did this person post this 20 years ago? You know, was it 10 years ago or was it last week? And that, I think, raises the specter of rehabilitation potential. You know, can a person be recoverable.

The CHAIRMAN. Absolutely. And it's not—it's not just violence. I agree with you. If it's, like, 10 years ago, if it's an offhand remark, whatever. But if you've got somebody who's in there right now ac-

tively vocally advocating these things, that is something the military should be concerned about, even if it isn't necessarily linked to violence.

Mr. BERRY. Yes, and I want to be clear that there are already mechanisms in place to handle that, and we have got fantastic prosecutors in the military that can and do address that just as we do with Federal prosecutors from the Department of Justice, FBI, et cetera.

So, you know, if somebody—but, again, you know, and I just—again, as a litigator, I look to what is the—what does the case law say? What is the jurisprudence from the Supreme Court and the military court.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. You've—sorry, you've answered my question and I know there's other members who want to get in and Mr. Rogers and I have to go.

Mike, I want to give you a chance. Do you have anything you want to say before we go to the order?

Mr. ROGERS. No, I just reiterate what I said in my opening statement. We need to tread very carefully here on First Amendment rights. This is—this is dangerous territory.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Now, we will try to get Mr. Moore. Do we have you up and working here?

Mr. MOORE. Can you confirm that you can hear me?

The CHAIRMAN. We got you.

Mr. MOORE. Okay.

The CHAIRMAN. Seems loud. Seems clear. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOORE. Okay. I'll be brief. Thank you all for being here. Thank you, Chairman, Ranking Member.

I hope that my question actually strikes the tone that the chairman just laid out. I'm hosting [audio interference] many airmen, pilots, and Active Duty folks and about this topic, and the resounding piece that comes from them is very, very small.

I have not interacted with it. I have not had experience with it. And I just—I'm concerned, and I communicate this. I'm concerned that it gets blown up to too much. That's not me saying I don't think we should talk about it and we should—we should—we have to address this.

But my questions to the experts today is how do we make sure to overemphasize morale so that this doesn't become a resounding—a small, small minority of instances?

How does that not become way too prevalent, if you will, that it hurts morale and it hurts the willingness for people to go and serve their country?

That's my biggest concern with this—with this entire topic. Is there—is there systems in place to make sure that, you know, if it's a communication strategy or anything of the like, how do we make sure that we do that for our men and women serving so this—they don't get branded as this—as this becomes more widely discussed?

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you. If I could respond to that question.

I think that what's exciting about this stand-down that the Secretary has called for and conversations around this, we need to in-

vite conversations around, you know, our differences and commonalities.

I think that we need to normalize conversations about what is going on in the broader society so that—I don't know if you saw the recent "60 Minutes" piece where service members who had been in for quite some time really welcomed the opportunity to have these hard conversations.

And so once we begin to normalize that, I think it takes it out of the—outside of the possibility of it being seen as something that is happening or not happening in the military and not in the broader society.

Ms. CRONIN. I would also add, sir, that the morale is extraordinarily important and your question is extremely sensitive and it requires very great care.

But the—our armed services need to be concerned with good order and discipline, and if you have members of that armed services espousing ideas that attack and alienate other members, you're going to have a dissipation of the strength of the force overall.

So that's a morale problem, too. So, I think, in a very sensitive way if we handle this and have these conversations, we're actually going to be strengthening morale.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Moore, do you have anything further?

Mr. MOORE. Nope. I'll yield back. I appreciate the comments. I will yield back for time constraints.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. So here's what we're going to do. I've got three people now. Mr. Panetta, Ms. Strickland has returned, and Ms. Jacobs. So I have got to go to a classified briefing. But what I'm going to do is I'm going to trust the three of you.

Mr. Panetta, you are going to speak and in 5 minutes, hopefully, you're done. And then you turn it over to Ms. Strickland, and Ms. Strickland will then turn it over to Ms. Jacobs, who will then wrap up the hearing. And, hopefully, we won't have any glitches between here and there.

So Jimmy, I am turning—I'm turning the committee over to you and you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PANETTA [presiding]. I got it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that. Obviously, thanks to you and to Ranking Member Rogers for not only having this thing, but yes, for discussing it, for dealing with it, and for leaning in on it and, therefore, your leadership on it. So I appreciate this opportunity.

Thanks to all the witnesses for being here and, obviously, your preparation and your knowledge and your expertise on this issue, and your willingness to take the time to come talk about it and discuss it as well. So thank you very much.

I guess following up on a couple of questions that just were posed to you. I didn't necessarily—in regards to the chairman's question, Mr. Berry, in regards to what disciplinary options are there, is it just UCMJ? Are there other ways to go about it?

If somebody—you know, if there is some sort of, you know, somebody owns a white supremacists sticker or clothing or magazine or something like that, what are the options that the commanders have at that point?

Mr. BERRY. Thank you, Congressman.

Military leaders have a plethora of options available to them to address disciplinary matters. It doesn't just have to go to UCMJ. In fact, that would be the most drastic.

You know, a court martial would be the most drastic measure taken. Less drastic measures could be administrative separation. So that's, you know, separation from the military that doesn't carry with it a Federal conviction and criminal record and other collateral punishment.

It could be a reduction in rank or other forms of administrative punishment or administrative discipline, or it could just be counseling, you know, training—sort of some of the rehabilitation efforts that we've discussed here previously, and that—and so if you suspect that a service member, that a junior service member, might be susceptible to becoming a victim to radical and extremist ideology and then begin down that path, then I think it's incumbent upon leadership to—you have to know your troops, and then—and you have to address it early and nip it in the bud as quickly as possible. Otherwise, it can spread.

And so—but to answer your question, briefly, Congressman, yes, there are any number of options that fall short of court-martialing and federally prosecuting a service member.

Mr. PANETTA. Okay. And, look, on that aspect of training, I think, you know, if you've been in the [audio interference] through those less than effective training programs that can happen sometimes, apparently, I guess what the word was in regards to the recent unit-led extremism stand-down that there was a lot of boxes being checked was the feeling.

Is there any other DOD efforts that we have heard about to not just standardize but to make better and more effective this type of training for our military members who need it the most? And all these—

Mr. BERRY. Yes, Congressman. I'm aware of the article, I think, to what you're referring about the—you know, sort of the proverbial checking the box. And I think that is something that DOD leadership should be concerned about is not being perceived as merely checking the box.

One of the things that I've learned in my experience on Active Duty is that nothing brings together service members to truly—to truly form a bond and forge a bond like shared adversity.

And once you have that shared adversity, you forge that bond of unit cohesion and morale, then there really is a sense of collective accountability.

And so I think instead of this being pushed down from a top down approach—

Mr. PANETTA. Reclaiming my time. Thank you. I'm just running out of time.

Let me just take it to Ms. Cronin and give her an opportunity to answer that as well.

Ms. CRONIN. Okay. Yes, sir. Yes, sir, Mr.—yes, sir, Mr. Panetta, I do wish we had someone here from DOD because I'm sure they would have more ideas.

But I would say that the military is excellent at developing people of character, and one of the ways that they do that is through

personal counseling and personal mentoring of other military members.

So we need to have our leaders at the top levels, but also our NCO [noncommissioned officer] leaders, who are able to counsel those who show the signs. But in order for them to counsel, they have to know the signs, and currently I'm not convinced that they do.

Mr. PANETTA. Fair enough. Fair enough. And basic on that, I know Mr. Keating and I got just a little bit.

Ms. Cronin, what is the role of individual service members and peers addressing other peers when they see that? Is there any sort of training or mandate on that one?

Ms. CRONIN. Sir, I don't know about the training or mandate currently. But that would be an excellent question for DOD. I will say that after the horrible tragedy at Fort Hood in 2009 with Major Hassan, one of the criticisms that was made of those around him was that they did not report their concerns about his behavior.

So we need to make it safer for people to report their concerns in this kind of a situation and I think the military knows how to do that, and they need to protect those who come forward, too.

Mr. PANETTA. Okay. Thank you, Ms. Cronin. I'm going to turn the gavel over to Ms. Strickland.

Ms. STRICKLAND [presiding]. Great. Thank you very much. Well, thank you to all of our panelists who are here. So a bit about my background—I shared this with Ms. Brooks—is that my father served in military, fought in two wars, and he joined the military when it was segregated, and he was stationed in Korea where he met my mother. And so, you know, when I think about extremism, I agree that we are not trying to suppress anyone's right to express themselves or hold beliefs.

But we also know that extremism can have an effect on morale. I also know that, you know, when people join the military, they're really young and they're impressionable. And so as we think about how we screen people for extremist ideology, can you talk about how we can improve the screening process and who is actually participating in a screening process who will know to look out for extremism? And I will direct that to all of our speakers but I'd like to start with Ms. Brooks, please.

Ms. BROOKS. Thank you, Ms. Strickland.

I would refer back to just what Dr. Cronin was sharing, that it's important that the people who are doing the interviewing or the recruiting also be trained on identifying the signs. And so the recruitment officer, the people that are working out in the field, the first commanders, they all need to be able to recognize the signs of some exposure to extremist thought.

And there's a whole kind of, you know [audio interference] with respect to tattoos and this kind of thing.

There's a lot of screening that is done currently when a recruit joins the military. We're—all what we're asking is that being able to identify the signs of exposure to extremist thought and behaviors that that be a part of that.

We're also looking at taking a closer look at what happens in between, because we recognize that some people enter the military al-

ready radicalized, some become radicalized while they're in the service, and then again at reentry.

So thank you.

Ms. STRICKLAND. Thank you.

Mr. Berry.

Mr. BERRY. Congressman, I think it would be interesting and important to study and perhaps try to distinguish between, as Ms. Brooks just said, those who enter the military already having been, quote/unquote, "radicalized" and then those who become radicalized after joining the military.

I think that is an important distinction. I also think there can be ways—our recruiters, our military recruiters, go through a pretty robust training program to become recruiters. So I think that that can be incorporated into their training in terms of—in the same way that they identify membership in criminal gang activities and whatnot.

But I do want to caution that there is, I think, a potential constitutional danger in asking service members or would-be service members to essentially self-report. I think that raises some First Amendment and Fifth Amendment implications.

Ms. STRICKLAND. Great. Thank you.

Dr. Cronin.

Ms. CRONIN. I think I agree with what my fellow witnesses have said. I would only add that I'm not necessarily talking about self-reporting. I'm talking about those around the person who is expressing extremist ideas or showing signs in terms of tattoos or using websites inappropriately.

It's usually their buddies who know that first, so they need to be safe enough to be able to report that to their—to their leaders.

Ms. STRICKLAND. Yeah, and, you know, and thank you for your responses. And, again, I just—I will just emphasize, and I have, you know, a good friend who attended one of the military academies, and he just reminds me again you have people who joined the service, they are young, they are impressionable, and if they have contact with people with extreme views, it wouldn't be a surprise if they started adopting them themselves, and also, too, reminding us that the Commander in Chief can set the tone for how people think about how we interact with each other.

So thank you very much for this opportunity, and thank you all for being here. And I'm now going to yield to my colleague, Representative Sara Jacobs.

Ms. JACOBS [presiding]. Well, thank you so much, Marilyn.

I actually want to follow up on your question. But before I do that, I just want to say to some of my colleagues who have expressed concern about this hearing that I'm hearing from constituents very frequently.

[Audio interference] members—I represent San Diego, which is a proud military community—who feel like the extremism that they're seeing in the military denigrates their service, and hearing from parents who are afraid about their children and, in particular, their daughters' safety while they're in the military.

So this is not about trying to go on a witch hunt. This is about making sure our service members are safe and are not surrounded by extremists when they join the military to serve our country.

So I wanted to [audio interference] of people being recruited into the military who are already radicalized, the problem of people who are radicalized once in the military, and the problem of people who, upon leaving the military [audio interference] radicalized.

And I recognize that we need more data on all this, but Professor Cronin, I was hoping you could talk a little bit about if you think those three are the actual bucket, which one of them poses the biggest problem or should we be focusing the most on?

Ms. CRONIN. Yes, ma'am, Ms. Jacobs.

Part of the time you were talking there was a pause in the Zoom. So if I did not understand your question, please correct me.

Of the three places—recruitment, in Active Duty, and then leaving Active Duty—I think that the most dangerous is probably leaving Active Duty on the basis of—this is just on the basis of my impression because, again, we don't have that data.

But I think we need to make sure that our veterans have access to the kind of training and information and education that will prevent them from falling into these kinds of extremist ideas.

Ms. JACOBS. Okay, thank you. That's helpful.

And then [audio interference].

VOICE. Ms. Jacobs, we're having a—

Mr. MOORE. Rep. Jacobs—yeah, we're having a tough time hearing you there.

VOICE. Ms. Strickland, if you could take the gavel back if this continues, that would be wonderful.

Ms. STRICKLAND [presiding]. All right. So is there anyone else who would like to speak at this time?

[No response.]

Ms. STRICKLAND. All right. Seeing them, so I want to thank our guests for being here. I hope I'm doing the right thing in lieu of Chair Smith.

Thank you for this very robust conversation. I will just say that, you know, this is a complicated issue that we recognize. We never want to trample on rights but want to make sure that we have morale that is strong, we have strong recruitment and retention numbers, and that the general public has trust in our institutions, including our military, that they are going to be people who are going to uphold their oath and keep us all safe and protected.

I know that on January 6th when there was the failed insurrection at the Capitol and we heard that there were some members of the military and veterans who were part of that, it caused great alarm.

So we love our military, we respect them, and we want to make sure that they have the tools they have to be successful and rooting out extremism is one way to do that.

So thank you, everyone, for being here today, and we are now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:40 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MARCH 24, 2021

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 24, 2021

Statement of Audrey Kurth Cronin

Distinguished Professor
Director, Center for Security, Innovation and New Technology

American University
Washington, D.C.

for the Hearing on

“Extremism in the Armed Forces”

The Committee on Armed Services

U.S. House of Representatives

One Hundred Seventeenth Congress

Rayburn House Office Building
Wednesday 24 March 2021

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Committee, thank you for your service to our country and for the honor of testifying before you today.

I am Audrey Kurth Cronin, Distinguished Professor at American University in Washington, D.C. and Director of the Center for Security, Innovation, and New Technology. I come from a proud U.S. Navy family whose father and three brothers all served, and my career has combined both academic positions and government service. I have been director of the core course on War and Statecraft at the U.S. National War College and Specialist in Terrorism at the Congressional Research Service. I have served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy and in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. I am an award-winning author on terrorism and extremism. My best-known book, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (2009),¹ was written in answer to a question posed to me by a senior Senator in the aftermath of 9/11. My latest book, *Power to the People: How Open Technological Innovation is Arming Tomorrow's Terrorists* (2020),² analyzes the risks and opportunities of emerging technologies, especially their use by terrorists and extremists. I am testifying on the basis of decades of experience researching terrorism and extremism, working with the military, and serving in both the executive and legislative branches.

The violent extremism that erupted during the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol had a disproportionate number of current or former members of the U.S. Armed Forces leading the mob. Protesters exploited both traditional and digital communications at unprecedented scale and speed. The images of Americans storming the citadel of our democracy, threatening elected Members of Congress and their staffs on January 6th, were alarming enough. But as FBI investigations now generate a flood of indictments, further troubling signs of extremism in the military are coming into focus and resonating with the public. Nothing is more threatening to a democracy than the military interfering in the peaceful transfer of power. But the evolving technological context in which this event occurred is also pertinent. The United States has experienced a tectonic shift in communications that affects the Armed Forces just as it does every other element of society. We must protect our Service members and veterans from nefarious actors using digital means to manipulate their trust.

Protecting patriotic Service members who serve honorably and deserve our support, even as we mitigate the problem of violent extremism in the ranks, will be a long-term test. Educating and engaging our veterans is also vital. The speed at which people are radicalized and mobilized via digital media has ramped up. That trend is heightening extremism and will not reverse itself because it is part of a new technological environment. To meet this challenge, we must first collect accurate data to assess the extent of the military's problem objectively, then devise a comprehensive plan to address it, and ultimately institute trackable policies that are tailored to the digital age.

¹ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

² Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Power to the People: How Open Technology Innovation is Arming Tomorrow's Terrorists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Background

Military veterans were prominent in planning and executing the 2021 attack on the Capitol, often in a leadership role. Three militia organizations stand out in particular: Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, and the Three Percenters. These organizations mimic the structures of our military, hijack and disfigure its tenets, and prize its skills. The Oath Keepers, named for members' professed intent to protect the Constitution, played a central organizing role in the attack. It was founded by Stewart Rhodes, a former U.S. Army paratrooper. The group has a formal structure of leaders, membership, and dues, and it makes the recruitment of military and law enforcement a priority.³ Three of four Proud Boy members charged this month with conspiring over the encrypted channel "Boots on the Ground" in advance of the attacks were veterans.⁴ Another paramilitary group, the Three Percenters ("III%"), named for the belief that only three percent of the American colonists fought the British, aggressively recruits veterans.

Information emerging in charging documents has been shocking: A retired Air Force veteran, Larry Randall Brock, Jr., photographed on the floor of the Senate holding zip ties, posted a phrase from the Oath of Enlistment on his Facebook page: "Against all enemies, foreign and domestic."⁵ A retired Army Green Beret with more than 20 years of service was charged with assaulting a D.C. police officer by throwing an American flag at him like a spear.⁶ And a Marine Corps veteran and retired New York police officer allegedly used a flagpole with a large Marine Corps flag on it to beat a D.C. police officer.⁷

At this writing, prosecutors have charged at least 312 people in the January 6th assault, of whom thirty-seven are current or former military.⁸ Nearly half of military-linked alleged perpetrators are veterans of the U.S. Marine Corps (18), almost a third served in the U.S. Army (11), two in the U.S. Air Force, and two in the U.S. Navy.⁹ Three of those accused are active-duty enlisted (two in the U.S. Army Reserve, one in the U.S. National Guard), and one additional person's Service is unconfirmed.¹⁰ Veterans make up only about 7% of the U.S. population as a

³ Veterans Fortify the Ranks of Militias Aligned with Trump's Views," *The New York Times*, 11 September 2020; at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/11/us/politics/veterans-trump-protests-militias.html>.

⁴ Spencer S. Hsu and Rachel Weiner, "Proud Boys Conspired in Multiple Encrypted Channels ahead of Jan. 6 Riot, Fearing Criminal Gang Charges, U.S. Alleges," *Washington Post*, 19 March 2021; at https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/capitol-riots-indictment-proud-boys/2021/03/18/971da624-8770-11eb-82bc-e58213caa38e_story.html.

⁵ U.S. Government Detention Exhibits, Larry Randall Brock, Jr., George Washington Program on Extremism; at <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/Larry%20Randall%20Brock%20Government%20Detention%20Exhibits.pdf>.

⁶ Kyle Rempfer, "Retired Green Beret Assaulted Cop with Flagpole during Capitol Riot, Charges Allege," *Army Times*, 19 March 2021; at <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2021/03/19/retired-green-beret-assaulted-cop-with-flagpole-during-capitol-riot-charges-allege/>.

⁷ Insider searchable data base, at <https://www.insider.com/all-the-us-capitol-pro-trump-riot-arrests-charges-names-2021-1>.

⁸ "Over 300 Charged from more than 40 States: What We Know about the 'Unprecedented' Capitol Riot Arrests," *cbsnews.com*, 18 March 2021; at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/capitol-riot-arrests-2021-03-18/>.

⁹ Gina Harkins and Hope Hodge Seck, *Military.com*, 26 February 2021; at <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/02/26/marines-infantry-most-highly-represented-among-veterans-arrested-after-capitol-riot.html>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

whole but about 10% of accused insurrectionists, especially those who organized and led the siege.

Before January 6th, there was anecdotal evidence about connections between the U.S. military and extremist groups. In its 2020 report to the Committee on Armed Services about how well those who seek to enlist are screened, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness described military involvement in the Neo-Nazi groups Identity EVROPA (now called the American Identity Movement) and the Atomwaffen Division, the Boogaloo movement, and in other White nationalist assemblies. The report also exhibited a series of tattoos, symbols, flags, and posters appearing in photographs of military members. Included was a transcript of Brandon Russell, a U.S. National Guard Member and co-founder of Atomwaffen Division, bragging on the online “Iron March” forum about how easy it was to share White supremacist views in the military. Claimed Russell: “I was 100% open about everything with the friends I made at training. They know about it all.”¹¹ Focused on screening recruits, however, the report did not analyze how widespread the problem is, noting that “The number of current and former military personnel who ascribe to White supremacist and nationalist identity is unknown.”¹²

There have been other apparent signs of growing extremism in the ranks. According to a 2019 survey of 1,630 active-duty *Military Times* subscribers, more than a third (36%) of respondents had seen evidence of White supremacist and racist ideologies in the military, a significant increase over the 22% who reported this the year before.¹³ In 2020, 57% of minority troops polled said they had personally experienced some form of racist or White supremacist behavior.¹⁴ But these are surveys performed by a newspaper based on voluntary participation by readers, so the results are unscientific. We cannot consider them an accurate or comprehensive reflection of the state of the force overall.

Looking at it from another direction, the percentage of veterans who are members of extremist right-wing groups or anti-government militias has long been higher than in the general population. This is logical because extremist groups place a premium on military tactical and operational skills and try to attract former military members. Groups such as the Oath Keepers, Proud Boys, and Three Percenters also encourage current members to join the military to get training and experience, which raises their status and credibility. This training includes tactical skills and weapons use and specialized things like communications or cyber expertise. When

¹¹ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, *Report to the Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces*, OPA Report No. 2020-080-0, June 2020, p. 21; and John M. Donnelly, “Pentagon Report Reveals Inroads White Supremacists Have Made in Military,” *CQ Roll Call*, 16 February 2021; at <https://www.rollcall.com/2021/02/16/pentagon-report-reveals-inroads-white-supremacists-have-made-in-military/>.

¹² *Ibid.*, footnote 7, p. 19.

¹³ Leo Shane, “Signs of White Supremacy, Extremism Up Again in Poll of Active-Duty Troops,” *Military Times*, 6 February 2020; at <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/02/06/signs-of-white-supremacy-extremism-up-again-in-poll-of-active-duty-troops/>. In answering a similar question on a 2020 poll, only 31% of active-duty members saw signs of extremist behavior, so a decrease of 5% but still well over the 2018 level.

¹⁴ Leo Shane, “Troops: White Nationalism a National Security Threat Equal to ISIS, Al Qaeda,” *Military Times*, 3 September 2020; at <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/09/03/troops-white-nationalism-a-national-security-threat-equal-to-isis-al-qaeda/>.

current extremists do join, other military members, especially impressionable young recruits, may be vulnerable to their influence.

But we must be cautious not to fault the Services for what is also a broader American societal problem. Many of those charged in the Capitol assault were military “wannabes,” people who had tried to join the military and were screened out, or who had gone through basic training and washed out. The system worked. Some claimed to be military trained, members of an elite “patriot army,” but had no actual military connection. And the degree to which the Services control their former members should not be overstated: veterans are private citizens and, apart from potentially withdrawing retirement benefits from officers, the military has no leverage or control over what they do. It is unrealistic to insist that our military leaders and organizations take full responsibility for correcting a problem that has grown nationwide and has become part of our civic landscape.

Senior leaders are setting the tone, strongly affirming that racism and domestic violent extremism will not be tolerated in the Armed Services. In early February 2021, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin ordered a military standdown and explained the seriousness of the problem. “Unfortunately, extremism not new to our country or our military,” Secretary Austin said. “What is new,” he added, “is the speed and pervasiveness with which extremism ideology can spread today thanks to social media and the aggressive, organized, and emboldened attitude many of these hate groups and their sympathizers are now applying to their recruitment and for their operations.” Secretary Austin concluded by asking Service members to share their experiences in encountering extremists and their ideas about how to stamp out extremist ideologies in the ranks, to rebuild, “the bonds of trust upon which we all rely.”¹⁵

Addressing extremism in the U.S. Armed Forces is also vital because trust in the military is declining. According to the February 2021 National Defense survey published by the Ronald Reagan Institute, public trust and confidence in the military has dropped from 70% in 2018 to 56% in 2021.¹⁶ The American people afford military members specialized training in tactics, operations, and procedures, give them access to deadly weapons, and entrust them with sensitive secrets. Those who are privileged to join the U.S. military must be held to a higher standard than the general public is. That is why we must stop relying on either anecdotes or generalizations and rigorously determine how great an extremism problem the US Armed Forces actually have.

Clarifying the Terms

We should begin with a precise explanation of what it is that should be assessed or measured. A good starting point is the Intelligence Community’s definition of a domestic violent extremist (DVE). A domestic violent extremist is “an individual based and operating primarily in the United States without direction or inspiration from a foreign terrorist group or other

¹⁵ A Message from the Secretary of Defense on Extremism, 19 February 2021; at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bORC7yyfRwA>.

¹⁶ Reagan Institute National Defense Survey, February 2021; at <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/reagan-institute/centers/peace-through-strength/reagan-institute-national-defense-survey/>.

foreign power and who seeks to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence.”¹⁷

We should also note that the January 6th attack met the legal definition of domestic terrorism in U.S. law, Title 18, Section 2331 (5), which names acts that “appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping.”¹⁸ Whatever else we might call it, the January 6th violence visited on the U.S. Capitol was domestic terrorism, and some of the perpetrators of the violence were current or former members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Domestic Violent Extremists can represent different ideologies, including racist White supremacist/anti-ethnic (including anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-Hispanic, anti-Semitic), neo-Nazi, anti-government, anti-technology, anarchist, anti-fascist (Antifa), and conspiratorial fringe (such as QAnon). In addition to those already mentioned (Oath Keepers, Proud Boys, Three Percenters), relevant groups or movements include Incels, Kenosha Guard, and the Boogaloo movement. (This is not a comprehensive list.) In recent years, the vast majority of domestic violence has come from violent right-wing extremists, including White supremacists and anti-government individuals and groups. According to the Anti-Defamation League, violent right-wing extremists committed 76% of the 435 U.S. terrorism-related deaths between 2010 and 2019, almost always in mass shooting events using firearms.¹⁹ In the same period, left-wing perpetrators killed 3%.²⁰

The United States has a deep history of left-wing extremist violence--also included in the term Domestic Violent Extremist (DVE)--but it is not the main threat now. Historically, U.S. left-wing extremism has erupted in two major spikes: violent Anarchist bombings that peaked between 1905 and 1921, killing scores of Americans;²¹ and anti-Vietnam bombings that dominated the 1970s, with almost 1500 incidents.²² Nothing occurring in association with Black Lives Matter protests and other racial unrest has approached the levels of those periods—or the level of today’s right-wing extremist violence. Linked with left-wing protests in recent months has been property damage (such as the 2020 burning of the Minneapolis Police Department’s Third Precinct building and the fires in Washington, D.C.), one killing (the August 29, 2020

¹⁷ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Domestic Violent Extremism Poses Heightened Threat in 2021*, Intelligence Assessment (unclassified summary), 1 March 2021; at <https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/UnclassSummaryofDVEAssessment-17MAR21.pdf>.

¹⁸ U.S. Code, Title 18, 2331, Crimes and Criminal Procedures, Definitions #5: “the term ‘domestic terrorism’ means activities that (A) involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State; (B) appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and (C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States.” At <https://codes.findlaw.com/us/title-18-crimes-and-criminal-procedure/18-usc-sect-2331.html>. See also “What Happened at the Capitol was Domestic Terrorism, Lawmakers and Experts Say,” *Washington Post*, 7 January 2021; at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2021/01/07/domestic-terrorism-capitol-mob/>.

¹⁹ Anti-Defamation League, “Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2019,” Center on Extremism, February 2020, p. 12; at <https://www.adl.org/murder-and-extremism-2019>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18

²¹ Cronin, *Power to the People* (2020), pp. 116-120.

²² Search for 1970-79, United States, all incidents, in the Global Terrorism Database at <https://start.umd.edu/gtd/>.

murder of a pro-Trump demonstrator in Portland by a self-professed Antifa supporter and veteran, who was then killed by police), and several other attempted attacks that were intercepted by police.²³ Apart from the August killing in Portland, I can find no additional public examples of left-wing extremist violence associated with current or former members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

How to Respond

Address an Absence of Data

The most immediate problem in determining how to handle extremism in the military is an absence of good data. Military-connected right-wing extremist violence is not a new phenomenon—the most notorious example is Timothy McVeigh, Army veteran of Desert Storm. McVeigh killed 168 people in the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. That same year, three White soldiers were convicted of killing a Black man and woman outside Fort Bragg, North Carolina. On investigation, it emerged that the three were neo-Nazi skinheads, and the killing had been motivated by a desire by the triggerman to earn a spider web tattoo, a sign that the wearer had killed a Black or LGBTQ person.²⁴ Secretary of Defense Austin was then a lieutenant colonel overseeing operations in the 82nd Airborne Division, the unit all three perpetrators were in, and he has pledged to take the same approach to root out violent extremism and racism today.²⁵

The 2021 Capitol insurrection leaves the impression that the number of extremists in the military is increasing. Yet, in recent years, military officials have also repeatedly claimed that the number of extremists in the ranks is small. In 2018, in response to a Congressional request by then-Representative Keith Ellison, the Pentagon conveyed that there had been 27 reports of extremist activity by Service members over the previous five years.²⁶ That is a minimal number. The DoD backs that impression up with an annual report to Congress that includes only the small number of disciplinary cases that arise independently.²⁷ No one at the Pentagon tracks or monitors extremism aggressively and systematically, across all military Services, military law enforcement, and investigative bodies.

²³ For a full description of these incidents, see Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware, “Terrorism and Counterterrorism Challenges for the Biden Administration,” *CTC Sentinel*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, January 2021; at <https://ctc.usma.edu/january-2021/>, pp. 4-6.

²⁴ “2nd Ex-Soldier is Sentenced to Life in Slaying of 2 Black Victims,” *Chicago Tribune*, 13 May 1997; at <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1997-05-13-9705130165-story.html>.

²⁵ Paul Sonne and Missy Ryan, “As He Tackles Extremism, Lloyd Austin Draws on Military’s Experience Dealing with 1995 Racially Motivated Murders,” *Washington Post*, 31 January 2021; at https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/as-he-tackles-extremism-lloyd-austin-draws-on-militarys-experience-dealing-with-1995-racially-motivated-murders/2021/01/30/64c450ee-5c0d-11eb-aaad-93988621dd28_story.html.

²⁶ Shawn Snow, “27 Reports of Extremist Activity by U.S. Service Members over the Past 5 Years, DoD Says,” *Marine Corps Times*, 13 September 2019; at <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2019/09/13/27-reports-of-extremist-activity-by-us-service-members-over-the-past-5-years-dod-says/>.

²⁷ Dave Philipps, “White Supremacism in the U.S. Military, Explained,” *The New York Times*, 27 February 2019; at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/us/military-white-nationalists-extremists.html>. An effort by former representative Keith Ellison to elicit information about known activities in the military yielded a letter with two dozen names and no indication of which had been removed from the military for white supremacy.

To move us toward a better understanding of extremism in the military—whether it is a large number or a small number—we must measure it comprehensively. Currently, no centralized data are collected across DoD Services and agencies to measure allegations, disciplinary infractions, discharges, or reprimands related to extremism. We do not know how many people are identified as extremists in the military and how many incidents or crimes they commit.²⁸ Decisions on discharges and penalties are handled by commanders, individually, on a case-by-case basis. Military leaders like to say that you cannot fix what you cannot measure, and no serious plan can be built without defining the scope of the problem.

Build Common Standards or Rules across DoD

Part of the challenge facing military leaders is the difficulty of walking a fine line between Service members' Constitutional protections of free speech and freedom of assembly, on the one hand, and enforcing good order and discipline, on the other. Protecting the Constitutional rights of military members is the right thing to do. It is also important to avoid strengthening the narrative of right-wing anti-government groups and militias. It is generally against the law to criminalize membership in political organizations. Further, most of the Services have rules permitting members to join extremist organizations as long as they do not become "active" members, meaning they do not fundraise, recruit, or participate in illegal activities. But rules regarding what exactly members can and cannot do vary from Service to Service, as does enforcement of those rules.

To begin with, there is no consistent definition of domestic violent extremism in the Department of Defense. Good definitions are available in other parts of the U.S. government, however. They just need to be adopted and standardized within DoD.

Second, there are inconsistent policies across the Department of Defense in determining what extremist activities are, what should happen to Service members who engage in them, and how significant a problem there is. For example, the Navy has a regulation covering "separation by reason of supremacist or extremist activities" including illegal discrimination or "advocating the use of force or violence against any federal, state, or local government or agency thereof, in violation of federal, state or local laws."²⁹ It has an extremism discharge code but it does not track such violations or know how many sailors it has sanctioned or discharged under that offense.³⁰ The Army has regulations against extremism, and soldiers who violate them can be punished or discharged. Still, incidents are filed under "misconduct," there is no discharge category for extremism and no way to know how many extremists it has sanctioned or discharged.³¹ The Air Force uses the term "impermissible behavior," discharges members for

²⁸Bryan Bender, "The military has a hate group problem. But it does not know how bad it's gotten," *Politico*, 11 January 2021; at <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/01/11/military-right-wing-extremism-457861>.

²⁹ Geoff Ziezulewicz, "The Navy Has No Idea How Many Sailors It Has Booted for Extremist Activity," *Navy Times*, 11 February 2021; at <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2021/02/11/the-navy-has-no-idea-how-many-sailors-it-has-booted-for-extremist-activity/>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Kyle Rempfer, "The Army Doesn't Know How Many Extremists It Has Booted," *Army Times*, 19 February 2021; at <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2021/02/19/the-army-doesnt-know-how-many-extremists-it-has-booted/>.

misconduct, and does not track overall statistics. There should be one military separation code for discharge that has a standard definition and is trackable across all the Services.

There is hope that these department-wide discrepancies might be rectified soon. On December 17th, Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller tasked the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness to review current policy, laws, and regulations concerning active participation by Service members in extremist or hate group activity and produce a report by June 30, 2021. Hopefully, this document will highlight the Services' disparities in how they define and enforce their regulations, lay out steps to institute comprehensive data collection, and set milestones for progress across the entire department. Secretary Miller also directed the Office of General Counsel and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs to review the Uniform Code of Military Justice and develop proposed language for an update to Address Extremist Activity in the military, due on July 31, 2021.³² These are both promising initiatives.

Third, another thing that hobbles the military in dealing with this threat is fuzziness in identifying which organizations are dangerous. For foreign terrorists, or at least those with foreign ties, there is a government-wide Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list of terrorist groups formally designated by the Secretary of State pursuant to section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended under the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (P.L. 104- 132). The Secretary adds organizations to the list if they meet three criteria: 1) the organization is foreign; 2) the organization engages in terrorist activity; and 3) the terrorist activity threatens the security of U.S. citizens or the national security of the United States.³³ FTO designation is a process coordinated with the State, Justice, Homeland Security, and Treasury departments. When American citizens join, support, or otherwise provide material support to any organizations on the FTO list, they break the law and may be prosecuted.³⁴

There is no such U.S. designation domestically. Service members who join domestic violent extremist organizations are not automatically doing something illegal under U.S. law — one reason for the differences in how the Services treat them.³⁵ In the Services' regulatory language about extremist groups, militia organizations are usually not mentioned. If there were a recognized list of domestic organizations, perhaps a "DTO" or "DVEO" list, then the Armed Forces would have legal clarity in pursuing those who join or support organizations that appear on it. Being on such a list would also stigmatize the group and counterbalance narratives about joining a "patriot army" or "saving our country" that could try to reframe and distort the violent

³² U.S. Secretary of Defense, "Actions to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military," Memorandum for Senior Pentagon Leadership, 17 December 2020, pp. 4-5; at <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554854/-1/-1/0/ACTIONS-TO-IMPROVE-RACIAL-AND-ETHNIC-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-IN-THE-U.S.-MILITARY.PDF>.

³³ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *The 'FTO List' and Congress: Sanctioning Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, CRS Report for Congress, #RL32120, 21 October 2003.

³⁴ 18 U.S.C. 2339B.

³⁵ In this regard, President Trump's May 2020 promise that left-wing Antifa would be designated as a terrorist organization is difficult to understand, as the Secretary of State is responsible for FTO designations under the law, and there is no equivalent designation for domestic groups. At a minimum it would have invited legal challenge.

attacks on the U.S. Capitol. The Department of Homeland Security or the FBI would be the logical counterparts to the U.S. State Department in such a designation process.

Any law or policy action that might infringe on personal liberties needs to be approached with the utmost care, and devising a new domestic designation process in our polarized political context would, of course, be very difficult. But we should at least concede that, unlike in the foreign realm, the Pentagon has no national legal guidelines for identifying domestic violent extremist organizations. Its challenges reflect the challenges of the American political context.

Make Addressing Extremism a Long-term Priority

The U.S. military is very good at tackling personnel problems that they prioritize. Military commanders and lawyers pursued the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy against lesbian, gay and bisexual service members with ruthless efficiency, discharging more than 13,000 service members in the seventeen years the policy was in effect (1993-2011).³⁶ They also did so with child pornography and have begun to make progress in addressing, tracking, reducing, and prosecuting the serious problem of sexual assault and harassment.³⁷ In short, after recognizing and measuring the scope of a personnel problem, the U.S. Armed Forces are fully capable of putting in place effective long-term measures to address it.

The only way to address extremism comprehensively and effectively is to put a bureaucratic structure in place and ensure adequate oversight to follow through.³⁸ Putting a short-term task force in place could help identify the status of the problem now, but it will not signify the long-term commitment of attention and resources to solving it. The best way to ensure change is to have a person responsible for sustained oversight across DoD. This could either be a confirmable Assistant Secretary of Defense (under the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness) or a long-term senior-level civilian appointed to be directly responsible for tracking, addressing, and monitoring progress reducing extremism across Services and Agencies. When it takes a personnel problem seriously, the U.S. military may be the most effective organization in the world at putting systems in place to correct it.

Improve Education and Training

Addressing the problem will also require longer-term, serious training of military members at different levels. Beginning with senior Commanders, most do not know the rapidly changing digital ecosystems of extremist groups. They do not have the most up-to-date information and often do not know where to find it. There should be a standardized, military-wide online database of symbols, memes, slogans, social media and website platforms,

³⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, “Report of the Comprehensive Review of the issues Associated with a Repeal of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,’” 30 November 2010, p. 23; at https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/dont-ask-dont-tell/DADTReport_FINAL.pdf.

³⁷ U.S. Army Secretary Releases Results of Fort Hood Review, 8 December 2020; and Report of the Fort Hood Independent Review Committee, 6 November 2020; both at <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2440007/army-secretary-releases-results-of-fort-hood-review/>.

³⁸ Doyle Hodges, Bureaucratizing to Fight Extremism in the Military, *War on the Rocks*, 10 February 2021; at <https://warontherocks.com/2021/02/bureaucratizing-to-fight-extremism-in-the-military/>.

connected to the FBI and civilian law enforcement for regular updates, easily accessible to military investigators, military law enforcement, and commanders.

In addition, active-duty military members should have regular, periodically updated digital literacy training aimed at making them less susceptible to online misinformation, disinformation, and active recruitment. This is important not just for the extremist threat but it is an essential element of defense against a broad range of information operations. The problem of digital literacy is another broad societal problem. Still, it should be aggressively tackled by the U.S. Armed Forces, who are held to higher standards of behavior and directly targeted by domestic violent extremist groups.

Work More Closely with Veterans Organizations

A most difficult challenge is how to address the role of former military members, who are part of civilian society and thus subject to civilian courts' judgment. Many former military members naturally yearn for the deep connection they had with their military teammates and colleagues, for the agency, camaraderie, and sense of mission they valued in the military. DVE militia groups consciously play upon that desire for comradeship. This has been particularly difficult during the pandemic, with its widespread shutdowns, intense economic suffering, and personal isolation.

Still, the Services could work more closely with veterans' groups to find better ways to connect former members to each other and to their communities, to seek productive civic roles after they leave the Service. Providing support for our veterans, to help them reintegrate into civilian society, is a national security imperative. It is important to remember that many of the law enforcement personnel who protected the Capitol on January 6th were also former military members.³⁹

Learn from Our Allies

Our partners and allies have dealt with the problem of extremism in the military, and we should learn from their experiences. In the mid-to-late 1990s, the Norwegians and the Swedes established programs to reverse a range of types of domestic violent extremism, including neo-Nazis, neo-fascists, and White supremacist groups. Norwegian Exit programs began in 1995 and have had impressive success in reducing the problem among young adults. Exit Sweden was established in 1998 and it relies upon a large number of former members of extremist groups, lending credibility and adding to its effectiveness. The Swedish program trains networks of professionals such as teachers, counselors, police and social workers who know the warning signs that an individual might be at risk. They also rely heavily on former members speaking and sharing their stories with others who could be at risk.⁴⁰

³⁹ Michael Robinson and Kori Schake, "The Military's Extremism Problem is Our Problem," *The New York Times*, 2 March 2021; at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/02/opinion/veterans-capitol-attack.html>.

⁴⁰ Casie Elizabeth Daugherty, "Deradicalization and Disengagement: Exit Programs in Norway and Sweden and Addressing Neo-Nazi Extremism," *Journal for Deradicalization*, Winter 2019/20.

The Germans have deep experience with the challenge of Nazi ideology and extremism in their military and law enforcement organizations, but also a long history of coping with left-wing radicalization and violence. DoD could examine the lessons of disengagement and deradicalization programs such as the German Institute on Radicalization and Deradicalization Studies (GIRDS) in order to build greater expertise within DoD on the range of push and pull factors to monitor among the ranks.⁴¹

This summary barely scratches the surface of a complex topic; however, our DoD leaders might consult with our allies to understand the best approaches (and the pitfalls to avoid) in rehabilitating and reintegrating those who are captured (or might potentially be captured) by dangerous extremist ideologies.

Recognize and Address the Role of Digital Technology

There is no avoiding the need to engage in stronger and more comprehensive screening of social media and website use for active-duty military members. Permission to access that information is already provided through the clearance process, so this is not a significant expansion of intrusiveness.

It does not make sense for every other business or private organization in the United States to be able to routinely vet its prospective employees by accessing their open-source social media and internet activity, but not the Department of Defense. Periodic monitoring of social media and website behavior can be enabled by the use of algorithmic tools to search for red flags including memes, key words, and organization names. These can help identify those who violate the prohibition on active participation in extremist groups. The role of digital technology is crucial to this problem.

We have experienced an enormous change in the scale and scope of access to individuals online. Everyone has a powerful computer not just on their desks but in their pockets. In recent months, online radicalization has become much easier and faster, facilitated by the heavy dependence upon technology during the pandemic. It used to take people at least 18 months to be radicalized. Now we are seeing radicalization in a matter of weeks.

There is also greater potential for our military members to be individually recruited and groomed. Algorithms help people discover other groups or movements with which they might have affinity—in the United States, groups like Proud Boys, Kenosha Guard, and the Boogaloo movement or self-proclaimed anarchists, Antifa and Black Bloc adherents.⁴² And online sites like 4chan, 8kun, Telegram, Reddit, and Discord, among others, have all boosted militia movements in places like Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Oregon.

The digital environment has enhanced the ability of individuals and extremist groups to radicalize other people for violence, to have exceptional reach, and to integrate complex tactical

⁴¹ See, in particular, Daniel Koehler, *Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁴² Hoffman and Ware, “Terrorism and Counterterrorism Challenges for the Biden Administration,” *CTC Sentinel*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, January 2021; at <https://ctc.usma.edu/january-2021/>, p. 6.

systems. In the twentieth century it required a national army to do all three of these things—mobilization, power projection, and systems integration. Now individuals or small groups, including terrorists and extremists, can do them all.⁴³ They do not have to be able to go toe-to-toe with our military to dissipate our strength and cohesion from within. If we don't address the effects of a challenging digital landscape, we will never get on top of this problem.

Conclusion

Only two things can truly defeat the U.S. Armed Forces: undermining the American people's trust, and cleavages within the ranks. Every other enemy can be met with unity, determination, effectiveness and success. Perhaps the silver lining of the horrible specter of the storming of the U.S. Capitol will be the determination to address extremism among the U.S. Armed Forces in a profound and lasting way. To do that, we need comprehensive information, planning, and action, to include measures I have tried to outline in this testimony.

Again, I thank you for the honor and privilege of being a witness at this hearing.

⁴³ This argument is more fully developed in Cronin, *Power to the People: How Open Technological Innovation is Arming Tomorrow's Terrorists* (2020).

Audrey Kurth Cronin
Professor of International Security and Director of the Center for Security, Innovation,
and New Technology at American University

Audrey Kurth Cronin joined the faculty of American University's School of International Service in August 2016. Her previous position was Director of the Center for Security Policy Studies, and Director of the International Security Program at George Mason University. Before that, she was a faculty member and director of the core course on War and Statecraft at the U.S. National War College (2007-2011). Professor Cronin's career has combined academic positions and government service. She came to the war college from Oxford University (Nuffield College), where she was Academic Director of Studies for the Oxford/Leverhulme Programme on the Changing Character of War (2005-2007). Before that, she was Specialist in Terrorism at the Congressional Research Service, advising Members of Congress in the aftermath of 9/11. She has also served in the U.S. Executive branch, including in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Office of the Secretary of the Navy; and the American Embassy in Moscow. She often consults at senior levels of the U.S. government. Professor Cronin is widely published on strategy and nonstate actors. Her 2009 book, which *The New Yorker* called "a landmark study," was *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton University Press). Her latest book is *Power to the People: How Open Technological Innovation is Arming Tomorrow's Terrorists* (Oxford University Press), which analyzes digital technology's role in inciting extremism. It won the prestigious 2020 Airey Neave book prize.

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 117th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), and contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing. Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5) also requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose whether they are a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing. As a matter of committee policy, the House Committee on Armed Services further requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of any contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with any organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number), will be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee. Witnesses may list additional grants, contracts, or payments on additional sheets, if necessary. Please complete this form electronically.

Hearing Date: March 24, 2021

Hearing Subject:

Extremism in the Armed Forces

Witness name: Audrey Kurth Cronin

Position/Title: Distinguished Professor, American University and Director, Center for Security, Innovation, and New Technology

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)



Individual



Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2021

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
No such contracts	or grants recieved.		

2020

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
No such contracts	or grants recieved.		

2019

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
No such contracts	or grants recieved.		

2018

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
No such contracts	or grants recieved.		

Foreign Government Contract, Grant, or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants), or payments originating from a foreign government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2021

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
No such foreign	government contracts	or grants	received.

2020

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
No such foreign	government contracts	or grants	received.

2019

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
No such foreign	government contracts	or grants	received.

2018

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
No such foreign	government contracts	or grants	received.

Fiduciary Relationships: If you are a fiduciary of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

Organization or entity	Brief description of the fiduciary relationship
Not Applicable	

Organization or Entity Contract, Grant or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants) or payments originating from an organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months, please provide the following information:

2021

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
I am testifying as payments.	an individual and have	recieved no such	contracts, grants or

2020

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2019

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

2018

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment

**Testimony of Lecia Brooks
Chief of Staff, Southern Poverty Law Center
before the
Armed Services Committee
United States House of Representatives**

**Extremism in the Armed Forces
March 24, 2021**

My name is Lecia Brooks. I am chief of staff of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on extremism in the U.S. Armed Forces and what we can do to address this challenge.

Now in our 50th year, the SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people. SPLC lawyers have worked to shut down some of the nation's most violent white supremacist groups by winning crushing, multimillion-dollar jury verdicts on behalf of their victims. We have helped dismantle vestiges of Jim Crow, reformed juvenile justice practices, shattered barriers to equality for women, children, the LGBTQ+ community, and the disabled, and worked to protect low-wage immigrant workers from exploitation.

The SPLC began tracking white supremacist activity in the 1980s, during a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and other organized extremist hate groups. Today, the SPLC is the premier U.S. nonprofit organization monitoring the activities of domestic hate groups and other extremists. Each year since 1990, we have conducted a census of hate groups operating across America, a list that is used extensively by journalists, law enforcement agencies, and scholars, among others.

The SPLC Action Fund is dedicated to fighting for racial justice alongside impacted communities in pursuit of equity and opportunity for all. Along with our partners, we work primarily in the southeast United States and have offices in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Washington, D.C. The SPLC Action Fund promotes policies and laws that will eliminate the structural racism and inequalities that fuel oppression of people of color, immigrants, young people, women, low-income people, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Right now, the white supremacist movement in the United States is surging and presents a distinct and present danger to this country and its institutions, including the Armed Forces. In February 2020, I testified before this Committee's Subcommittee on Military Personnel¹ that those who are indoctrinated into white supremacist ideology present a significant threat to good order, morale, and discipline in the military,² national security, and the safety of our

¹ Testimony of Lecia Brooks, Southern Poverty Law Center, Before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel U.S. House Armed Services Committee, "Alarming Incidents of White Supremacy in the Military—How to Stop It?" February 11, 2020. <https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/110495/witnesses/HHRG-116-AS02-Wstate-BrooksL-20200211.pdf>.

² Indeed, supremacist ideology is utterly inconsistent with Military Equal Opportunity, as outlined in the Department of Defense Directive on "Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity in the DoD": "The right of all Service

communities. This fact was dramatically illustrated, once again, by the recent arrests of several veterans for their active involvement in the deadly January 6 insurrectionist siege at the U.S. Capitol.

The vast majority of those who serve in our Armed Forces have no connection to white supremacy or extremism and uphold the best traditions of our nation's democratic ideals. Though the number of extremists associated with the Armed Forces who engage in hate crimes and criminal extremist activity is relatively small, their capabilities and specialized weapons training make them prime targets for extremist propaganda and recruitment.³ Recent investigations have identified dozens of veterans and active-duty servicemembers who are affiliated with white supremacist activity.⁴

This is far from a new problem. In fact, the SPLC has been documenting white supremacist infiltration of the military and urging officials to take substantial and systematic action since 1986. It is now clear that, despite some adjustments in policies related to recruitment and conduct within the Armed Forces, white supremacist and extremist activity continues to persist in the military.

Assessing the Current Threat of White Supremacist Terror

In recent years, we have witnessed devastating violence carried out by individuals radicalized by white supremacist propaganda. This propaganda, found primarily online, is intended to recruit young people into an extremist worldview that portrays white people as being systematically replaced by nonwhite migrants—and people of color more broadly—and that demands urgent, radical, and violent action to “reset” America. This antidemocratic movement—composed of different groups with various extreme and hateful ideologies—puts a premium on the type of training afforded by the Armed Forces. It is thus no surprise that extremist groups and individuals encourage their followers to join a branch of the military and that they target existing servicemembers and veterans for recruitment. However, the rising tide of extremism within the

members to serve, advance, and be evaluated based on only individual merit, fitness, capability, and performance in an environment free from unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity), or sexual orientation.”

<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/102002p.pdf> NUMBER 1020.02E June 8, 2015, Incorporating Change 2, Effective June 1, 2018.

³ Kristy N. Kamarck, “Military Personnel and Extremism: Law, Policy, and Considerations for Congress,” Congressional Research Services, CRS Insight IN11086, May 16, 2019, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11086>.

⁴ Military personnel are current prohibited from “active participation in ... organizations that advocate supremacist, extremist, or criminal gang doctrine, ideology, or causes; including those that attempt to create illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, ethnicity, or national origin; advocate the use of force, violence, or criminal activity; or otherwise engage in efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights.” Active participation is defined: “Active participation includes, but is not limited to, fundraising; demonstrating or rallying; recruiting, training, organizing, or leading members; distributing material (including posting online); knowingly wearing gang colors or clothing; having tattoos or body markings associated with such gangs or organizations; or otherwise engaging in activities in furtherance of the objective of such gangs or organizations that are detrimental to good order, discipline, or mission accomplishment or are incompatible with military service.” DoD 1325.06, “Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces,” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, November 27, 2009, Incorporating Change 1, February 22, 2012 <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/132506p.pdf>.

Armed Forces and veterans' communities cannot be stymied without tackling the scourge of far-right extremism in broader American society. To put it another way, as Heather Williams of the RAND Corporation noted in *DefenseOne*: "The military has a growing extremism problem because America does."⁵

Analyses of two terrorism crime databases show that "rightwing terrorists" are significantly more likely to have military experience than any other category of terrorists indicted in U.S. federal courts." Between 1980 and 2002, 18% of far-right terrorists indicted in federal courts had military experience. The same study showed that "over 40% of rightwing terrorists with military experience assumed some position of leadership within their organization," making them more than twice as likely to end up in leadership than someone without military training.⁶ A study by Pete Simi and Bryan Bubolz found that, in a sample of far-right extremists (FRTs) gathered from the American Terrorism Study database, open sources, and interviews, at least 31% had military experience—as compared to 10% of the U.S. population at large. "More specifically," they wrote, "we found 17 percent of the FRTs with military experience were founders of their FRT organizations, 22 percent were leaders in their FRT organizations, and the remaining 43% were core members of their FRT organizations."⁷

Other studies show that white supremacist organizations appear to have enjoyed a measure of success in their ambitions of reaching members of the Armed Forces. According to a 2019 poll conducted by *Military Times*, 36% of active-duty servicemembers who were surveyed reported seeing signs of white nationalism or racist ideology in the Armed Forces—a significant rise from the year before, when 22% reported witnessing these extremist views.⁸ In the same survey, more than half of servicemembers of color reported experiencing incidents of racism or racist ideology, up from 42% in 2017.⁹ These numbers jumped again in 2020, when a *Military Times* poll conducted in the midst of nationwide racial justice protests last summer found that 57% of servicemembers of color said they had witnessed these incidents in their ranks. Likewise, of all the troops who participated in the survey, 48% listed white nationalists as a major national security threat—a mere half of a percentage point below the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, and other foreign terrorist organizations.¹⁰ "Peers have been very vocal on how they believe that George Floyd deserved his death and are quick to point out black on black crime," one *Military Times*

⁵ Heather Williams, "How to Root Out Extremism in the US Military," *Defense One*, February 1, 2021, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2021/02/how-root-out-extremism-us-military/171744/>.

⁶ Brent L. Smith, Kelly Damphousse, Steven Chermak, and Joshua Freilich, "Right Wing Extremism and Military Service," in Andrew J. Bringuel, Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.), Jenelle Janowicz, Abelardo C. Vilida, and Edna F. Reid, eds., *Terrorism Research and Analysis Project (TRAP): A Collection of Research Ideas, Theories and Perspectives* (Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011), 361-362.

⁷ Pete Simi and Bryan Bubolz, "Military Experience, Identity Discrepancies, and Far Right Terrorism: An Exploratory Analysis," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, August 2013, 660.

⁸ Leo Shane III, "Signs of White Supremacy, Extremism Up Again in Poll of Active Duty Troops," *Military Times*, Feb. 6, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/02/06/signs-of-white-supremacy-extremism-up-again-in-poll-of-active-duty-troops/>.

⁹ Leo Shane III, "One in Four Troops Sees White Nationalism in the Ranks," *Military Times*, Oct. 23, 2017, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2017/10/23/military-times-poll-one-in-four-troops-sees-white-nationalism-in-the-ranks/>.

¹⁰ Leo Shane, III, "Troops: White nationalism a national security threat equal to ISIS, al-Qaida," *Military Times*, Sept. 3, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/09/03/troops-white-nationalism-a-national-security-threat-equal-to-isis-al-qaeda/>.

poll participant noted in their 2020 survey. “They complain that every ethnicity has an observance month but have nothing to celebrate ‘white pride.’”¹¹

These findings track with the SPLC’s own reporting and research on extremist activity in America throughout the Trump era. In 2019, the SPLC documented the highest number of active hate groups—1,020—since it began its annual census of these groups in 1990. Most alarming, the number of white nationalist groups rose by nearly 50%.

While the SPLC’s most recent *Year in Hate* report identified 838 hate groups active in 2020—an 11% decline from 2019—it is important to understand that the number of hate groups is merely one of many metrics for measuring extremist activity in the United States. A decline in hate group numbers, in other words, does not equate to a drop in extremist activity.

During this same period, the SPLC has documented an alarming, upward trend in white supremacist violence. Three major factors have contributed to this increase: rising anxiety over rapid demographic change in the United States; toxic rhetoric that singles out and demonizes specific communities based on their immutable characteristics; and the unchecked proliferation of hateful propaganda and extremist disinformation on social media and the broader internet. Attacks in El Paso, Texas, Poway, California, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 2019 are stark reminders of the threat posed by white supremacist ideology and those it motivates to act. Each of these attacks was inspired by white supremacist conspiracy theories, particularly those that stoke animosity toward nonwhite migrants. The alleged perpetrators of these brutal acts of terror were demonstrably influenced by the propaganda of white supremacist organizations and their leaders. However, they were not known to be members of a hate group.

While this violence may have been inspired by the propaganda and rhetoric of hate groups, such as those included in SPLC’s annual hate count, these terrorist attacks are indicative of two disturbing shifts within the far right. These factors affect our servicemembers, just as they do the broader population in the United States.

First, they show the movement as a whole has become more violent. In addition to acts of domestic terrorism, these trends have manifested in other ways as well. As SPLC analysts noted in our 2020 *Year in Hate* report, there are many on the far right who “are no longer satisfied with letting the state maintain a monopoly on violence.”¹²

Second, the movement’s growing propensity for violence has happened alongside a transition within far-right communities away from traditional organizing structures and toward diffuse systems of decentralized radicalization.¹³ Increasingly many adherents to far-right

¹¹ Leo Shane, III, “Troops: White nationalism a national security threat equal to ISIS, al-Qaida,” *Military Times*, Sept. 3, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/09/03/troops-white-nationalism-a-national-security-threat-equal-to-isis-al-qaeda/>.

¹² Cassie Miller & Intelligence Project staff, “At the End of the Trump Era, White Nationalists Increasingly Embrace Political Violence,” Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 16, 2021, <https://www.splc.org/news/2021/02/16/end-trump-era-white-nationalists-increasingly-embrace-political-violence>.

¹³ Cassie Miller and Hannah Gais, “Capitol Insurrection Shows How Trends on the Far-Right Fringe Have Become Mainstream,” Southern Poverty Law Center, Jan. 22, 2021,

extremist ideologies are not members of any hate group, but this fact does not stop them from engaging in real-world actions.¹⁴ Extremists have instead turned to internet platforms, such as Telegram, that enable them to cohabitate with other individuals across various extremist ideologies, creating what researchers at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue have called a “post-organisational paradigm.”¹⁵ Here, organized hate groups, such as the ones tracked by the SPLC, have become nodes linked to more nebulous radical milieus. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the insurrection on January 6, where researchers have identified that members of organized hate or antigovernment groups have made up a minority of the arrests.¹⁶

The Boogaloo movement, a predominantly white and heavily armed subculture, exemplifies this general shift from traditional hate group structures to diffuse movements oriented toward violence.¹⁷ The movement, named after the 1984 breakdancing movie “Electric Boogaloo,” began as a racist meme online but has since spawned loosely affiliated real-life networks of supporters. Boogaloo adherents, often identified by their distinct style of wearing Hawaiian shirts under tactical gear, have become more visible at rallies and events in the last two years. While ideological boundaries appear to be muddled within the movement, it does represent a clear overlap between the hard-right antigovernment movement and the larger hate ecosystem. Its adherents are united in their advocacy for a second civil war and revolution against the current democratic system.¹⁸ Individuals associated with the Boogaloo movement have been involved repeatedly in acts of violence, including murder.

In June 2019, federal prosecutors in Las Vegas, Nevada, charged three members of the Boogaloo movement—Stephen T. Marshall, Andrew Lynam, and William L. Loomis—with crimes related to a terrorism plot.¹⁹ According to the criminal complaint, the men, all of whom previously served in the U.S. military, conspired to use gas-filled canisters and Molotov cocktails as explosives to manufacture chaos and violence at a local protest against the unlawful killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man killed by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota.²⁰

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/01/22/capitol-insurrection-shows-how-trends-far-rights-fringe-have-become-mainstream>.

¹⁴ Rachel Janik and Keegan Hanks, “The Year in Hate and Extremism 2020,” Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 1, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2021/02/01/year-hate-2020>.

¹⁵ Jakob Guhl and Jacob Davey, “A Safe Space to Hate: White Supremacist Mobilisation on Telegram,” Institute for Strategic Dialogue, June 26, 2020, <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A-Safe-Space-to-Hate2.pdf>.

¹⁶ The George Washington University Program on Extremism, “This is Our House: A Preliminary Assessment of the Capitol Hill Seige Participants,” March 2021, <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2191/f/This-Is-Our-House.pdf>; and The University of Chicago, Program on Security and Threats, “Capitol Hill Insurrectionists,” https://cpost.uchicago.edu/research/domestic_extremism/.

¹⁷ Cassie Miller, “The ‘Boogaloo’ Started as a Racist Meme,” Hatewatch, Southern Poverty Law Center, June 5, 2020, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2020/06/05/boogaloo-started-racist-meme>.

¹⁸ Hatewatch staff, “Who are the Boogaloos, Who Were Visible at the Capitol and later Rallies,” Southern Poverty Law Center, Jan. 27, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2021/01/27/who-are-boogaloos-who-were-visible-capitol-and-later-rallies>.

¹⁹ Michelle L. Price and Scott Sonner, “Prosecutors: 3 Men Plotted to Terrorize Vegas Protests,” The Associated Press, June 3, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/6223153093f08fa910c4ab445771b773>.

²⁰ Criminal complaint: U.S. v. Stephen T. Marshall, Andrew Lynam, and William L. Loomis, June 2, 2020, http://www.seditionists.com/parshall_complaint.pdf.

In addition to the attempt to foment violence at a peaceful protest, federal prosecutors learned that the group also considered targeting federal buildings, including a fee station on federal land and a U.S. Forest Service ranger station, and firebombing a power substation. This case powerfully highlights both the fervent antigovernment nature of the Boogaloo movement as well as its increasingly violent *modus operandi*.

On June 15, 2020, federal prosecutors charged U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Steven Carrillo with murder and the attempted murder of two security guards outside of a federal courthouse in Oakland, California, a month earlier.²¹ Carrillo was on active duty at the time and stationed at Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, California. He previously received training with an elite Air Force security unit.

Carrillo and his accused accomplice, Robert Alvin Justus Jr., were linked to Boogaloo ideology, according to the criminal complaint.²² Carrillo reportedly wrote in a Facebook group chat: “It’s on our coast now, this needs to be nationwide. It’s a great opportunity to target the specialty soup bois. Keep that energy going.” The phrase “soup bois” is thought to be in reference to federal law enforcement agencies whose acronyms may resemble alphabet soup. Justus reportedly replied to Carrillo, “let’s boogie.” Carrillo is also accused of killing a Santa Cruz County sheriff’s deputy in a shootout when officers tracked down the van thought to be associated in the courthouse attack. He was apprehended after fleeing and being pursued by authorities. In the van, authorities uncovered a vest with a patch featuring a logo of an igloo and Hawaiian-style print, which is often attributed to the Boogaloo movement. Carrillo is also said to have written “BOOG” and “stop the duopoly” on the hood of a car claimed to be stolen by him during the pursuit.

Other plots by white supremacists active in the military have luckily been thwarted, including the one hatched by Lt. Christopher Paul Hasson, a 49-year-old serving in the Coast Guard.²³ Hasson, who had also spent time in the Marine Corps and the Army National Guard, pleaded guilty to federal gun and drug charges—including unlawful possession of unregistered silencers; unlawful possession of firearm silencers unidentified by a serial number; possession of a firearm by an addict and unlawful user of a controlled substance; and possession of a controlled substance—in October 2019.²⁴ He was sentenced to more than 13 years in prison in February 2020.²⁵ Hasson identified as a white nationalist and advocated for “focused violence” against journalists, Democratic politicians, professors, U.S. Supreme Court justices, and “leftists” in

²¹ Katie Shepherd, “An officer was gunned down. The killer was a ‘boogaloo boy’ using nearby peaceful protests as cover, feds say,” *The Washington Post*, June 17, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/06/17/boogaloo-steven-carrillo/>.

²² Criminal complaint U.S. v. Steven Carrillo, June 15, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1285706/download>.

²³ Dave Philipps, “Coast Guard Officer Plotted to Kill Journalists, Prosecutors Say,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 20, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/us/christopher-hasson-coast-guard.html>.

²⁴ Christine Hauser, “Coast Guard Officer Called a ‘Domestic Terrorist’ Pleads Guilty to Gun and Drug Charges,” *The New York Times*, October 3, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/03/us/christopher-hasson-coast-guard-white-supremacist.html>.

²⁵ Michael Levenson, “Former Coast Guard Officer Accused of Plotting Terrorism is Sentenced to 13 Years,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 13, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/31/us/christopher-hasson-coast-guard-terrorism.html>.

order to establish a white ethnostate. He had been engaged with white supremacist ideologies before he joined the military in the 1980s.

Radicalization in Military Largely Ignored, Despite Alarms

There is no single radicalization narrative. An individual's pathway toward extremism is invariably complicated and can involve the combined factors of their life circumstances, outside influences, personal relationships, individual psychology, and the larger political climate. However, researchers have recognized that major changes in a person's identity, as well as changes in how they believe they are perceived by society, can contribute to far-right radicalization. Simi and Bubolz showed, for example, that individuals with a military background who become far-right extremists often get there through two different pathways. In the first, a person makes an involuntary exit from the military because they are unable to advance into specialized units or are discharged—honorably or dishonorably—for other reasons. While they want to remain in the military and advance their careers there, the institution has rejected them. As a result, they lose a defining part of their identity and seek validation elsewhere, especially in settings that allow them to reclaim their identity as a warrior or soldier. A far-right extremist group may feel like a welcoming and familiar place because of its congruities with the military, the appreciation for a veteran's specialized skills, the sense of camaraderie, and the value placed on traditional notions of masculinity.

In the second pathway identified by Simi and Bubolz, a person returning from the military finds that they don't receive the recognition or appreciation they feel they deserve for their service, leaving them with a sense of anger that could end up directed at an out-group or the government they once served.²⁶ Indeed, feeling betrayed by the government is an unfortunately common feeling among veterans of the nation's recent wars. In a 2019 poll, 64% of veterans said the war in Iraq was not worth fighting, and 58% said the same of the war in Afghanistan.²⁷ Many veterans also feel that the country abandoned them after their service. Sixty percent of veterans said in a 2014 poll that they thought the Department of Veterans Affairs was doing an "only fair" or "poor" job addressing the problems they faced.²⁸ It's no coincidence that a veteran who feels betrayed by their government might join a movement that sees the federal government as their enemy, as the white power movement does.

These are, of course, not the only connections between military service and right-wing extremism. Others develop extremist beliefs before they enter service, doing so in some cases to receive specialized training. Others become radicalized while serving, possibly by coming into contact with another servicemember who holds extremist beliefs. If those holding the extremist beliefs are superior in rank, or the commanding officer of your unit, the potential for radicalization without external oversight is much greater, we have been told by veterans. The military justice system is simply not set up to deal with a national security problem—such as the

²⁶ Simi and Bubolz, "Military Experience, Identity Discrepancies, and Far Right Terrorism: An Exploratory Analysis," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Aug. 2013.

²⁷ Ruth Igielnik and Kim Parker, "Majorities of U.S. veterans, public say the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were not worth fighting," Pew Research Center, July 10, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/10/majorities-of-u-s-veterans-public-say-the-wars-in-iraq-and-afghanistan-were-not-worth-fighting/>.

²⁸ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "A Legacy of Pain and Pride," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2014/03/29/a-legacy-of-pride-and-pain/>.

one posed by white supremacists—within its ranks. There is a need to examine how the particular command structure of the military, which differs from civilian life, can contribute to a culture where speaking out is not only difficult but career threatening.

Despite the fact that the path between the military and the white power movement is well worn, the U.S. military has consistently chosen to ignore the problem, passed insufficient policy changes, not enforced policies already on the books that restrict people with extremist views from serving in the Armed Forces, and failed to take action to deradicalize service members who are discovered to hold extremist beliefs. Discipline is often left to commanders, making enforcement of policies uneven.²⁹

Michel Paradis, a senior attorney in the U.S. Department of Defense's Office of the Chief Defense Counsel, argues that it may be time for a major overhaul of the system of military justice and the convening authority of commanding officers, but that this would be a radical, not incremental, change. As he discusses, "ordinarily, and historically, commanders have had the discretion to enforce or disregard the verdict and sentence rendered by the tribunal based on their judgment as to what will best serve their broader mission."³⁰

The Department of Defense cannot claim ignorance; Pentagon officials have been alerted to the problem of extremism in the ranks repeatedly and over many years. In fact, the SPLC first raised the issue in 1986 when we urged then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to investigate the participation of servicemembers involved with Glenn Frazier Miller's KKK paramilitary activities.³¹ Secretary Weinberger did issue a directive instructing servicemembers that they "must reject participation in white supremacy, neo-Nazi and other such groups which espouse or attempt to create overt discrimination." He told military personnel they were barred from "active participation" in these groups. However, as University of Chicago assistant professor Kathleen Belew explains in her book *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, "[T]he directive said nothing about other kinds of actions that undergirded white power activity—such as membership excluding 'organizing or leading,' distributing propaganda, or displaying white power symbols." As a result, "Active-duty personnel continued both passive and active participation in the white power movement."³²

In 1994, six months before the Oklahoma City bombing by Gulf War veteran Timothy McVeigh, we wrote to Attorney General Janet Reno to warn of the growing threat of domestic terrorism. In the wake of Oklahoma City and the murder of a Black couple by skinheads serving as active-duty paratroopers with the 82nd Airborne in 1995, the Defense Department tightened regulations on the participation of active-duty servicemembers in extremist activities.

But the increased scrutiny on white supremacist affiliation did not last. Facing recruitment shortages during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military relaxed recruitment

²⁹ Elliot Setzer, "Experts Recommend Changes to Structure of Military Justice System," Lawfare, April 22, 2020, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/experts-recommend-changes-structure-military-justice-system>.

³⁰ Michael Paradis, "Is a Major Change to Military Justice in the Works?" Lawfare, May 4, 2020, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/major-change-military-justice-works>.

³¹ <http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/images/dynamic/intel/weinberger.pdf>

³² Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 137.

standards and largely turned a blind eye toward the extremist beliefs or affiliations of potential recruits. As Matt Kennard wrote in *Irregular Army: How the U.S. Military Recruited Neo-Nazis, Gang Members, and Criminals to Fight the War on Terror*, the military itself admitted that recruitment had become lax. According to a 2005 report from the DoD's Defense Personnel Security Research Center, military recruiters "were not aware of having received training on recognizing and responding to possible terrorists who try to enlist." The report concluded: "Effectively, the military has a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy pertaining to extremism. If individuals can perform satisfactorily, without making their extremist opinions overt ... they are likely to be able to complete their contracts." A report the next year from the National Gang Intelligence Center also raised the problem of extremists serving in the Armed Forces, noting that "various white supremacist groups have been documented on military installations both domestically and internationally."³³ Nevertheless, when the SPLC highlighted the continued presence of white supremacists in the military that same year, then-Undersecretary of Defense David S. C. Chu dismissed our reporting as "inaccurate and misleadingly alarmist."

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also downplayed the seriousness of the problem and even ignored the insights of its own analysts. In 2009, a DHS analysis warned that the economic downturn and election of the nation's first Black president might provide fuel for right-wing extremists and that, amid the war on terror, right-wing extremists might "attempt to recruit and radicalize returning veterans in order to boost their violent capabilities."³⁴ Despite the report's accuracy and prescient warnings, then-Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano retracted it under pressure from conservatives who claimed, falsely, that it portrayed *them* as a security threat.³⁵ The report did not contain anything that should have been surprising to anyone in federal law enforcement or the DHS. Indeed, the FBI identified 203 veterans involved in white supremacist incidents between 2001 and 2008, according to Kennard, most of whom were associated with groups seeking "the overthrow of the U.S. government." The SPLC also found that antigovernment groups spiked during the Obama presidency, jumping from 149 in the final year of George W. Bush's presidency to 512 in the first year of Obama's and eventually peaking at 1,360 in 2012.

The fact that one in five of those arrested in connection to the Capitol insurrection on January 6 is partly a legacy of the military's long-running failure to adequately monitor for extremist links, address the presence of extremists in its ranks and to inoculate veterans against adopting extremist ideologies.³⁶

³³ Matt Kennard, *Irregular Army: How the US Military Recruited Neo-Nazis, Gang Members, and Criminals to Fight the War on Terror* (London: Verso, 2015), Pages 19, 40, 46

³⁴ "Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment," Extremism and Radicalization Branch, Homeland Environment Threat Analysis Division of the Department of Homeland Security, April 7, 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20110927124641/http://rogerhedgecock.com/resources/HSA_RightwingExtremism_Report_april2009.pdf.

³⁵ Eric Marropodi, "Napolitano Apologizes to Veterans over 'Extremist' Flap," *CNN*, April 24, 2009. <https://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/04/24/napolitano.am.legion/>.

³⁶ Tom Dreisbach and Meg Anderson, "Nearly 1 in 5 Defendants in Capitol Riot Cases Served in the Military," *NPR*, Jan. 21, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/21/958915267/nearly-one-in-five-defendants-in-capitol-riot-cases-served-in-the-military>

A Long History of Military Training for White Supremacist Leaders

Right-wing extremists poisoning the ranks of the military, or extremists using their military training to further their racist and often-violent ambitions, are not new problems. Historically, many of the white power movement's most infamous leaders have served in the military.

The Vietnam War and concomitant expansion of paramilitary culture domestically played a crucial role in the growth and mobilization of the white power movement in the 1970s and 1980s. The loss of that war was a major blow to the nation and, especially, the men asked to fight a losing war on its behalf. Not only was America's power abroad in question, but so was white men's dominance at home. The civil rights movement, federal legislation passed to advance racial equality, and the newly energized feminist movement appeared to pose a threat to white men, especially when combined with economic turmoil and a rapidly shifting economy. "American men—lacking confidence in the government and the economy, troubled by the changing relations between the sexes, uncertain of their identity or their future—began to *dream*, to fantasize about the powers and features of another kind of man who could retake and reorder the world," the sociologist and historian James William Gibson wrote in *Warrior Dream: Violence and Manhood in Post-Vietnam America*.³⁷ For some men, that meant reestablishing the country's racial order, and doing so by using the military tools and cultural narratives they learned in Vietnam. For others, the shame of having not served helped propel them to take up arms on this new battlefield.

Indeed, many men within the white power movement explicitly spoke of "bringing the war home." But this war would be fought against the state, which was working to codify racial and gender equality. Paramilitary organization was the only path forward: White power activists saw a wide gulf between President Ronald Reagan's campaign promises and what he delivered. His "moderation, as activists saw it, revealed conventional politics as unsalvageable and signaled a state of emergency that could not be resolved through political action alone," historian Kathleen Belew has argued.³⁸

For these men, the battle at home was an extension of the one they fought abroad. Both were crusades against communism, which they blamed for shifting racial hierarchies and larger changes in American (and global) culture that were seen as detrimental to white male privilege. Harold Covington, a veteran and leader in the American Nazi Party who would go on to found the white nationalist group Northwest Front, lamented that "[A]lmost all of my men have killed Communists in Vietnam and I was in Rhodesia as well, but so far we've never actually had a chance to kill the home-grown product."³⁹ But some of Covington's comrades in the American Nazi Party *would* go on to kill communists on American soil in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1979. At a "Death to the Klan" rally, neo-Nazis and Klansmen killed five members of Communist Workers Party. At a criminal trial, an all-white jury acquitted the white supremacists.

³⁷ James William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams: Violence and Manhood in Post-Vietnam America* (Hill and Wang, 1994), 11.

³⁸ Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Harvard University Press, 2018), 4.

³⁹ Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Harvard University Press, 2018), 76.

“Anytime you defeat communism, it’s a victory for America,” said Jerry Pridmore, one of the men found not guilty.⁴⁰

The focus on fighting a war on American soil, the shared anti-communist focus, and the perception of the state itself as the primary enemy of white men created a great sense of unity within the white power movement and pushed it toward more violent ends. Many veterans came into positions of leadership. Frazier Glenn Miller served for 20 years in the U.S. Army, including two tours of duty in Vietnam and 13 years as a Green Beret. Afterward, he founded the Carolina Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and, with the help of active-duty soldiers, began to amass illegal weapons and conduct military training. Miller, who also founded the White Patriot Party, had ties to The Order, a white supremacist terrorist organization whose members carried out armored car robberies and assassinated Denver radio show host Alan Berg. During a trial for criminal contempt in 1986, a witness testified that he had procured weapons and explosives for Miller, including 13 armor-piercing anti-tank rockets, from military personnel. Miller later served three years in prison for his involvement in a plot to kill SPLC founder Morris Dees. He and other Klansmen were flushed out of a mobile home in Missouri, where the FBI found C-4 explosives, hand grenades, automatic weapons and ammunition. In November 2015, Miller was sentenced to death on murder charges after he killed William Corporon, 69, Reat Underwood, 14, and Terri LaManno, 53, during an April 13, 2014, attack on Jewish facilities in Overland Park, Kansas.

Another well-known white supremacist, Louis Beam, who popularized the “leaderless resistance” model of white supremacist terrorism that is experiencing a revival, served as a helicopter gunner in the Army during the Vietnam War. Shortly after his return, he joined the United Klans of America and went on to become one of the most influential leaders in the white power movement during the 1980s and 1990s.⁴¹ He maintained a close relationship with Richard Butler, the head of the Aryan Nations, who was himself an Army veteran.⁴² Michael Tubbs, the leader of the Florida chapter of the neo-Confederate group League of the South, is a former Green Beret with expertise in demolitions. In 1990, Tubbs was arrested on charges related to a huge cache of weapons and explosives he had amassed, including 45 pounds of C-4 explosive, an anti-aircraft machine gun, and 25 pounds of TNT.⁴³ Authorities believed the arsenal was stolen from the military. A letter found by authorities suggested that Tubbs was planning to use the arsenal to outfit his group, Knights of the New Order, which was dedicated to “fostering the welfare of the white Aryan Race.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Shaun Assael and Peter Keating, “The Massacre That Spawned the Alt-Right,” *Politico*, Nov. 3, 2019.

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/11/03/greensboro-massacre-white-nationalism-klan-229873/>

⁴¹ “Louis Beam,” Extremist Files, Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremistfiles/individual/louis-beam>.

⁴² “Richard Butler,” Extremist Files, Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremistfiles/individual/richard-butler>.

⁴³ Heidi Beirich, “League of the South to Protest ‘Southern Demographic Displacement,’” Aug. 21, 2013.

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2013/08/21/league-south-protest-%E2%80%9Csouthern-demographicdisplacement%E2%80%9D>

⁴⁴ “Michael Ralph Tubbs,” Extremist Files, Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremistfiles/individual/michael-ralph-tubbs>.

Veterans and servicemembers bring social capital, legitimacy, specialized training, and an increased capacity for violence⁴⁵ to white power groups, which makes them highly sought-after recruits.⁴⁶ In one effort to appeal to veterans, William Luther Pierce, who founded the violent neo-Nazi group National Alliance in 1970, bought the subscribers list for *Soldiers of Fortune* magazine. Founded by a Vietnam veteran who served in the Special Forces, *Soldiers of Fortune* catered to veterans and young men fascinated by war and weaponry and contained ads for mercenary soldiers. In 1981, Pierce sent subscribers—who numbered around 35,000—copies of his magazine *National Vanguard* and an offer to purchase his novel *The Turner Diaries*.⁴⁷ The novel told the story of a future race war against the “Zionist Occupied Government” (ZOG) in which white people ultimately slaughtered nonwhites, Jews, journalists, and “race traitors.”

National Alliance later placed a billboard outside of Fort Bragg in Fayetteville, North Carolina. “Enough! Let’s Start Taking Back America!” it read and listed the group’s telephone number. Stationed at the base was the 82nd Airborne Division, which was itself home to a skinhead gang.⁴⁸ In December 1995, two of its neo-Nazi members murdered a Black couple, who they chose at random while driving the streets of Fayetteville. When police later searched their barracks, they found a bombmaking manual, a Nazi flag, pamphlets on Adolph Hitler and other white power literature.⁴⁹

The murders of the Black couple at Fort Bragg came only months after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City by Gulf War veteran Timothy McVeigh, which left 168 people dead.

Wade Michael Page was also stationed at Fort Bragg in 1995. According to his military service record, the Army administratively discharged Page in 1998 after demoting him from sergeant to specialist, ending his nearly six years of service. During his time at Fort Bragg, Page

⁴⁵ “Having members with military backgrounds may increase a group’s propensity towards violence in several ways. First, former members of the military may have particular technical and leadership skills that can be used by the group to commit violence. ... This skill set includes extensive training in the use of weapons, explosives, and combat strategies. Second, military veterans turned activist may have specific grievances directed at the government. Thus, we hypothesize that groups that have members with previous military training will be more likely to be involved in violence.” See Steven M. Chermak, Joshua D. Freilich and Michael Suttmoeller, “The Organizational Dynamics of Far-Right Hate Groups in the United States: Comparing Violent to Non-Violent Organizations,” National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, Dec. 2011. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/944_OPSR_TEVUS_Comparing-Violent-Nonviolent-Far-Right-Hate-Groups_Dec2011-508.pdf.

⁴⁶ “Extremist leaders seek to recruit members with military experience in order to exploit their discipline, knowledge of firearms, explosives, and tactical skills and access to weapons and intelligence.” FBI Intelligence Assessment, “White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel since 9/11” (unclassified), July 7, 2008, <https://documents.law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/White%20Supremacist%20Recruitment%20of%20Military%20Personnel%20Since%209-11-ocr.pdf>.

⁴⁷ James William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams: Violence and Manhood in Post-Vietnam America* (Hill and Wang, 1994), 7, 212.

⁴⁸ David Holthouse, “Several High Profile Racist Extremists Serve in the U.S. Military,” SPLC *Intelligence Report*, Summer 2006, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2006/several-high-profile-racist-extremists-serve-us-military>.

⁴⁹ William Branigin and Dana Priest, “3 White Soldiers Held in Slaying of Black Couple,” Dec. 9, 1995, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1995/12/09/3-white-soldiers-held-in-slaying-of-black-couple/1f11ca9f-9fe2-4e28-a637-a635007deaf/>.

already had a tattoo of a white supremacist slogan and openly expressed his virulently racist views and his desire for “a homeland for white people,” according one man who served with Page.⁵⁰ Two years after his discharge, in 2000, Page attended a music festival held annually by one of this country’s oldest and most violent racist skinhead crews. From there, Page plunged headlong into the white power music scene and 11 years later earned his full membership “patch” in that same crew, the Hammerskin Nation. About a year later, on August 5, 2012, Page entered the Sikh gurudwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. The sounds of worshippers preparing the day’s communal meal on that Sunday were shattered by the crack of gunfire, as Page began a shooting spree that left six people dead: Sita Singh, 41; Ranjit Singh, 49; Prakash Singh, 39; Paramjit Kaur, 41; Suveg Singh, 84; and Satwant Singh Kaleka, 65. Baba Punjab Singh was shot in the face, which caused brain trauma that led to permanent paralysis.⁵¹ Singh survived for nearly eight years before succumbing to complications related to his injuries on March 2, 2020. He was 72.

Page had received specialized training as a psychological operations, or “psyops,” specialist—a skillset that could have made him a prized asset to any number of the white power movement’s leaders. Many of these leaders spoke candidly about the value U.S. military training added to their racist organizations. Tom Metzger, an Army veteran who founded the neo-Nazi group White Aryan Resistance (WAR), told Matt Kennard that he estimated about “10 percent of the army and Marines ... are racist extremists of some variety.” Of his followers, Metzger said, “I would encourage them to join the military, if they have a scratch they can’t itch. Then go in to bring some training back to the US and make the federal government aware of our existence.” Neo-Nazi Billy Roper revealed that within his group, White Revolution, there were about a dozen members who served in the military. “Some of them have tattoos” of racist symbols, he said, “because anyone can walk in and get in the military now.” Two military members of his group were reprimanded for having swastika tattoos, he said. But when they had them altered and made into Sonnenrads—a widely used symbol among neo-Nazis—both were allowed to reenter the military.⁵²

Some Violent White Supremacists Use the Military as a Training Ground

Over the last several years, the SPLC, researchers, and journalists have identified dozens of former and active-duty military personnel among the membership of some of the country’s most dangerous and violent white supremacist groups. Those groups include the Atomwaffen Division, a now-defunct terroristic neo-Nazi group⁵³ whose members have allegedly been responsible for five murders since mid-2017. One of the people killed was a gay, Jewish college student named Blaze Bernstein who was stabbed more than 20 times.

⁵⁰ Rick Romel, “Shooter’s Odd Behavior Did Not Go Unnoticed,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Aug. 6, 2012, <http://archive.jsonline.com/news/crime/shooter-wade-page-was-army-vet-white-supremacist-856cn28-165123946.html>.

⁵¹ Marilyn Elias, “Sikh Temple Killer Wade Michael Page Radicalized in Army,” *SPLC Intelligence Report*, Winter 2012, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2012/sikh-temple-killer-wade-michael-page-radicalized-army>.

⁵² Matt Kennard, *Irregular Army: How the US Military Recruited Neo-Nazis, Gang Members, and Criminals to Fight the War on Terror* (London: Verso, 2015), Pages 24-25.

⁵³ “Atomwaffen Division,” *Extremist Files*, Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/atomwaffen-division>.

Brandon Russell, who launched Atomwaffen in 2015 from an online forum called Iron March, served in the Florida Army National Guard. After his roommate Devon Arthurs allegedly killed the pair's two other roommates—who were also members of Atomwaffen—police found a stash of explosive materials and homemade fuses. Inside a cooler labeled with Russell's name, they found hexamethylene triperoxide diamine, or HMTD, a homemade explosive used in past terror attacks, including the London bombing in 2005. A framed photo of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh was found in Russell's bedroom. Police released Russell after questioning, but only hours later he was arrested by Florida sheriff's deputies who found an AR-style assault rifle and more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition in his car. He also possessed flyers that read "Don't prepare for exams, prepare for race war."⁵⁴

According to Arthurs, Russell joined the National Guard in order to receive the kind of skills he would need to prepare for that potential race war. "He joined specifically for the knowledge and the training, and he wants to use that training against the government," Arthurs said during a police interrogation. He also told them that Russell had acquired guns and trained other Atomwaffen members in their use.⁵⁵

Atomwaffen Division specifically targeted members of the armed services, and its members were encouraged to enlist in the military to acquire specialized training. "The US military gives great training ... you learn how to fight, and survive," Joshua Beckett, an Atomwaffen member who formerly served as an Army combat engineer, told other members in the group's online chat.⁵⁶

While Beckett had left the military when he joined Atomwaffen, other members were still active in the Armed Forces while they were involved in the neo-Nazi group. Vasilios Pistolis was a Marine lance corporal when he became a member of the group's North Carolina cell. The search history of Pistolis's computer was highly disturbing; it included searches for information about the Norwegian terrorist Anders Breivik (who killed 77 people in 2011), the specific firearms equipment Breivik used in his attack, and manuals for building explosives and rifles.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ A.C. Thompson, "An Atomwaffen Member Sketched a Map to Take the Neo-Nazis Down. What Path Officials Took is a Mystery," ProPublica, Nov. 20, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>; "Florida Neo-Nazi Leader Gets 5 Years for Having Explosive Material, Associated Press, Jan. 9, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/floridaneo-nazi-leader-gets-5-years-having-explosive-material-n836246>.

⁵⁵ A.C. Thompson, "An Atomwaffen Member Sketched a Map to Take the Neo-Nazis Down. What Path Officials Took is a Mystery," ProPublica, Nov. 20, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>.

⁵⁶ A.C. Thompson, Ali Winston and Jake Hanrahan, "Ranks of Notorious Hate Group Include Active-Duty Military," ProPublica, May 3, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/atomwaffen-division-hate-group-active-duty-military-15>; Shawn Snow, "The neo-Nazi boot: Inside one Marine's descent into extremism," *Marine Corps Times*, Sept. 4, 2019, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/09/04/the-neo-nazi-boot-inside-one-marinesdescent-into-extremism/>.

⁵⁷ Shawn Snow, "The neo-Nazi boot: Inside one Marine's descent into extremism," *Marine Corps Times*, Sept. 4, 2019, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2019/09/04/the-neo-nazi-boot-inside-one-marinesdescent-into-extremism/>.

Others joined the military after being involved in the group. David Cole Tarkington, who went by the username “The Yank” on Iron March, recruited or attempted to recruit at least 12 members of the forum into Atomwaffen. Among some of the members Tarkington brought into the group were John Cameron Denton, known online as “Vincent Synder” and “Rape.” Denton would go on to become a co-leader of the group, while Tarkington would go on to join the Navy as an aviation’s mate’s apprentice with Strike Fighter Squadron VFA-41. Following a Gizmodo investigation, Tarkington is no longer a member of the squadron or the U.S. Navy.⁵⁸

“Soldiers, criminals and workers make the best Nazis just a fact,” Corwyn Storm Carver, then an active-duty member of the U.S. Army stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso, wrote in a chat with other Atomwaffen members in 2018. Carver also praised the actions of white supremacist terrorist Dylann Roof, who killed nine Black worshipers in a Charleston, South Carolina, church in 2015, but added, “Shooting up a geriatrics in a church is a soft target.”⁵⁹

Altogether, investigators have found seven members of Atomwaffen who have served in the military—a significant number considering the group has likely ever had, at most, about 100 members at a time.⁶⁰ Because of their sophisticated weapons and explosives training, those members significantly increased the group’s potential to carry out deadly attacks.

Despite the Defense Department’s insistence that it is taking all the necessary actions to prevent extremists from operating within the ranks, Russell’s case demonstrated that military officials at times were ignoring—either willfully or through neglect—clear signs of extremist activist among servicemembers. Indeed, in an investigation launched after Russell’s arrest, the Florida National Guard found that Russell had an Atomwaffen Division tattoo but that it apparently failed to prompt any action on the part of the Guard. The investigation, acquired by ProPublica, also found that Russell had expressed “hatred for homosexuality and ‘faggots’” and “seemed very anxious to receive body armor, and keep his military issued gear.” Nevertheless, investigators concluded that the Guard had not neglected its duties by allowing Russell to continue to serve.

Russell has since been sentenced to five years in prison on charges related to the explosive materials found in the apartment he shared with Arthurs and other Atomwaffen members.⁶¹ From prison, he has attempted to send instructions for building explosives to another member of the neo-Nazi group.⁶²

⁵⁸ Tom McKay and Dhruv Mehrotr, “Leak Exposes U.S. Navy Sailor as Once-Prolific Recruiter for Neo-Nazi Group [Updated],” Gizmodo, March 12, 2020, <https://gizmodo.com/leak-exposes-u-s-navy-sailor-as-once-prolific-recruite-1841149776>.

⁵⁹ Christopher Mathias, “Exclusive: Army Investigating Soldier’s Alleged Leadership In Neo-Nazi Terror Group,” *Huffpost*, May 3, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/atomwaffen-division-army-soldier-investigation-corwyn-stormcarver_n_5ccb5350e4b0e4d7572fde38.

⁶⁰ A.C. Thompson, “An Atomwaffen Member Sketched a Map to Take the Neo-Nazis Down. What Path Officials Took is a Mystery,” *ProPublica*, Nov. 20, 2018, <https://www.propublica.org/article/an-atomwaffen-member-sketched-a-map-to-take-the-neo-nazis-down-what-path-officials-took-is-a-mystery>.

⁶¹ Tamara Lush, “Florida Neo-Nazi leader gets 5 years for having explosive material,” *Associated Press*, Jan. 9, 2019, <https://apnews.com/6380120849a4470f9e569676718889e9>.

⁶² Janet Reitman, “How Did a Convicted Neo-Nazi Release Propaganda From Prison?” *Rolling Stone*, May 25, 2018, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/how-did-a-convicted-neo-nazi-release-propaganda-from-prison628437/>.

Atomwaffen Division was one of a growing number of groups that embraced violence as a tool that would ultimately help them foment a race war. They were one of many groups that believed society should be pushed to collapse, providing them the opportunity to build an all-white, non-Jewish ethnostate. These groups organize themselves into networks of clandestine cells, each charged with committing targeted acts of violence they believe will sow societal discord and ultimately attract more white people to their ranks.

It is worth noting that not all white supremacist extremists who promote revolutionary violence belong to hate groups. In fact, the numbers radicalized through online extremist communities and propaganda likely far outnumber those who belong to formal groups.

We are especially concerned that terroristic, cell-style white supremacist groups that embrace paramilitarism, conduct tactical training camps for members, and continually encourage members to carry out attacks against both people and the nation's infrastructure will attract veterans and active-duty servicemembers to their ranks. The recent arrests of two trained soldiers—one from the United States and one from Canada—who belonged to a terroristic white supremacist group called the Base have only heightened our concerns.

Brian Mark Lemley Jr., who was previously a Cavalry scout in the U.S. Army, and Patrik Jordan Mathews, a combat engineer in the Canadian Army Reserve until last August, were both arrested in January on federal gun charges in Maryland.⁶³ According to an FBI investigation, on an encrypted chat, members of the Base “discussed, among other things, creating a white ethnostate, committing acts of violence against minority communities (including African-Americans and Jewish Americans), the organization's military-style training camps, and ways to make improvised explosive devices.” Lemley once wrote, “I daydream about killing so much that I frequently walk in the wro[n]t [sic] direction for extended periods of time at work.” Mathews told members they should be prepared to “Derail some fucking trains, kill some people, and poison some water supplies.” He continued, “If you want the white race to survive you're going to have to do your fucking part.”⁶⁴

One day after Lemley and Mathews were arrested along with another Base member, authorities arrested three other members of the group in Georgia for conspiring to murder a couple involved in antifascist activism.

Lemley and Mathews were not the only members of the Base that had military training. The SPLC analyzed more than 80 hours of calls between Base recruits and the group's leadership, which included more than 100 white supremacists, and found that roughly 20% of recruits claimed to have military experience.⁶⁵ The group's founder, Rinaldo Nazzaro, also

⁶³ Department of Justice press release, “Three Alleged Members of the Violent Extremist Group, ‘The Base’ Facing Federal Firearms and Alien-Related Charges,” Jan. 16, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/pr/three-alleged-members-violent-extremist-group-base-facing-federal-firearms-and-alien>.

⁶⁴ Motion for Detention Pending Trial: U.S. v. Brian Mark Lemley, Jr., Patrik Jordan Mathews, and William Garfield Bilbrough IV, Jan. 21, 2020, <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6664597-Motion-for-Detention-The-Base-Maryland.html>.

⁶⁵ Sounds Like Hate podcast, Baseless: Part I, <https://soundslikehate.org/season-one/baseless/transcript/part1/>.

worked as a military contractor.⁶⁶ Earlier this year, the Department of Homeland Security confirmed to Vice News that Nazzaro worked at the department from 2004 to 2006.⁶⁷

In addition, in the spring of 2019, 11 servicemembers associated with Identity Evropa, a white nationalist hate group, were identified and reported to be under investigation by military officials. Those servicemembers included a lance corporal in the Marines, a master sergeant in the Air Force, a specialist and a physician in the Army, National Guard members in Minnesota and Texas, and two Army ROTC cadets.⁶⁸ Their affiliation with white supremacy came to light only after online correspondence among Identity Evropa members was released, underscoring both the widespread presence of white supremacists and the inconsistent nature of efforts to detect and weed out extremists from the Armed Forces.

The SPLC has tracked hate and extremism for decades, repeatedly raising the alarm to military leaders about white supremacists and other far-right extremists within the ranks. The time is now to work together to address extremism and hate that comprise a small but dangerous threat within our Armed Forces.

Recommendations for the Department of Defense and Congress

The military's unique command structure makes the need for leadership in rejecting extremism and bigotry essential. Instructors, officers, and upper-class students at service academies have virtually absolute command authority over their students and subordinates, creating a potential for undue pressure on an individual to conform—or not to complain or report bigotry, extremist activity, or race-based intimidation—in order to not jeopardize his or her military career. Commanding officers have the authority—and the responsibility—to address problems within their ranks before they escalate and, where necessary, to discipline or separate those who participate in extremist activity.

As the service branches pause to consider how to address hate, bias, and extremism during Secretary Austin's announced 60-day stand-down on the issue and beyond, we urge the Department of Defense and Congress to take actions needed to address this problem.

1. It is impossible to overstate the importance of military leaders speaking out against hate and extremism—from the Commander in Chief, to the Secretary of Defense, to the squad

⁶⁶ Daniel De Simone and Ali Winston, "Neo-Nazi Militant Group Grooms Teenagers," BBC, June 22, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-53128169>.

⁶⁷ Ben Makuch, "Department of Homeland Security Confirms Neo-Nazi Leader Used to Work for It, Vice, Feb. 17, 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/epd7wa/departement-of-homeland-security-confirms-neo-nazi-leader-used-to-work-for-it>.

⁶⁸ Christopher Mathias, "Exposed: Military Investigating 4 More Servicemen For Ties To White Nationalist Group," HuffPost, April 27, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/white-nationalists-military-identityevropa_n_5cc1a87ee4b0764d31dd839c.

leader.⁶⁹ Words matter. Military leaders must exercise leadership and use their command positions to condemn hate and extremism. Failure to do so emboldens extremists.⁷⁰

2. Consistent with the First Amendment, the Department of Defense should expand and clarify existing prohibitions against advocating for, or involvement in, supremacist or extremist activity,⁷¹ including updating and revising the provisions of Department of Defense Instructions Number 1325.06.⁷² To the greatest extent possible, these extremism-related institutional reforms should be made uniform from service to service.

In addition, the Department of Defense must ensure that recruiters and commanders responsible for identifying and addressing prohibited activities and discriminatory harassment have the education and training to recognize behaviors (social media or chat group activity⁷³), indicators (tattoos, symbols, or paraphernalia), or other indicators of involvement with supremacist ideology and activity.⁷⁴ The Department of Defense should

⁶⁹ “Stand-down to Address Extremism in Ranks,” Memorandum for Senior Pentagon Leadership, Defense Agency and DOD Field Activity Directors, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, Feb. 5, 2021, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Feb/05/2002577485/-1/-1/0/STAND-DOWN-TO-ADDRESS-EXTREMISM-IN-THE-RANKS.PDF>; SPLC wrote to Secretary Austin, offering support for his initiative and a number of policy recommendations.

https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/spic_letter_to_sec_of_defense_lloyd_austin_2.10.21-final.pdf

⁷⁰ An outstanding example of this type of leadership occurred after racial slurs were scrawled outside black students' doors at the U.S. Air Force Academy's (USAFA) preparatory school. USAFA Superintendent Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria called all 4,000 cadets together with faculty and USAFA staff and delivered an unmistakable message: “If you can't treat someone with dignity and respect, then you need to get out. If you can't treat someone from another gender, whether that's a man or a woman, with dignity and respect, then you need to get out. If you demean someone in any way, then you need to get out. And if you can't treat someone from another race, or different color skin, with dignity and respect, then you need to get out.” Though investigation later revealed that the slur was a hoax perpetrated by one of the targets, Gen. Silveria demonstrated model leadership in seizing the teachable moment to condemn hate and promote respect. See Bill Chappell, “‘You Should be Outraged,’ Air Force Academy Head Tells Cadets About Racism on Campus,” NPR, Sept. 29, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/09/29/554458065/you-should-be-outraged-air-force-academy-head-tells-cadets-about-racism-on-campus>.

⁷¹ In its December 2020, report, “Recommendations to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military,” the Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion, at 51, included a recommendation to prohibit extremist or hate group activity, emphasizing that “[t]his recommendation sends a clear and forceful message that DoD is committed to improving inclusivity. Service member participation in hate groups not only erodes the public's trust in their defense institution but also compromises our organization's lethality.” <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF>.

⁷² DoDI 1325.06, “Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces,” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, Nov. 27, 2009, Incorporating Change 1, Feb. 22, 2012. <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/132506p.pdf>.

⁷³ On Jan. 29, 2021, Representative Jackie Speier wrote to President Biden, Secretary of Defense Austin, and Director of National Intelligence Haines urging more extensive social media screening for new recruits and servicemembers seeking security clearances for white supremacist and violent extremist ties. https://speier.house.gov/_cache/files/9/2/9260a8a5-70e8-4a5a-b803-63762ce719ee/0DC836C67FFBB4841B15B7D7FE5295EB.2021-1-29-letter-to-potus-secdef-dni---social-media-clearance-recruiting.pdf.

⁷⁴ An October 2020 report mandated by the FY 2020 NDAA examined the security and effectiveness of existing screening for individuals who seek to enlist in the military. Among other things, the report recommended closer cooperation with the FBI, including expanded use of its database of extremist tattoos and more attention to potential recruits' social media presence. “Reports to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces,” <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/20486018-congressional-report-hasc->

also expand and more clearly define protections for whistleblowers,⁷⁵ chain of command oversight responsibilities, and reporting and transparency requirements.

3. Congress should update the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) to define and address extremist activity. The House of Representatives had included a provision to create a new UCMJ article on violent extremism in its version of the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Senate did not agree, and it was removed in conference.⁷⁶

Amending the UCMJ was one of the recommendations included in a recent report by the Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion.⁷⁷ An accompanying Memorandum to Pentagon leaders and commanders in the field included assignments, a specific plan of action, and milestones required to amend and update the UCMJ.⁷⁸

4. The Department of Defense should tighten recruitment and screening processes for military enlistees to prevent induction of individuals with white supremacist and racist

[study-regarding-screening-individuals-who-seek-to-enlist-in-the-armed-forces_pl_116-92-14-oct-20](#). Legislation has now been introduced by Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-CA) (H.R. 1088, Shielding our Military from Extremists Act) to require the Pentagon to implement the report's recommendations.

<https://www.congress.gov/117/bills/hr1088/BILLS-117hr1088ih.pdf>

⁷⁵ Although Department of Defense Directive NUMBER 7050.06 April 17, 2015, "Military Whistleblower Protection," describes a range of protected communications, including, crucially, protection for whistleblowing *outside* the chain of command ("lawful communications to a member of Congress or an inspector general (IG)"), protections for reporting white supremacist and extremist activity should be made more explicit.

https://www.dodig.mil/Portals/48/Documents/Policy/DoDD_7050_06.pdf. "A command climate that supports awareness and early intervention may provide opportunities to identify early signs of recruitment, radicalization, or participation in prohibited activities," Kristy N. Kamarek, "Military Personnel and Extremism: Law, Policy, and Considerations for Congress," Congressional Research Services, CRS Insight IN11086, May 16, 2019, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11086>.

⁷⁶ It is notable that the Conference Report accompanying the approved legislation (H.R. 6395) expressed support for the removed provision: "The conferees are increasingly concerned with the number of recent violent extremist activities which involve members and former members of the military. The conferees believe that a punitive article under the Uniform Code of Military Justice to prohibit violent extremist criminal acts may be appropriate to deter and prosecute this behavior within the Armed Services." <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20201207/CRPT-116hrpt617.pdf>.

⁷⁷ "Creating a clear definition of extremism and extremist activities can also aid in combating targeted recruitment of Service members by extremist organizations while counteracting young adult vulnerabilities. A clear definition of extremism may also better position the Services to provide training on extremist organizations' recruitment tactics, thus mitigating recruitment efforts." "Recommendations to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military," Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF>, Page 53, December 2020.

⁷⁸ "Recommendation 15: Update the Uniform Code of Military Justice to Address Extremist Activity. The DoD Office of the General Counsel (OGC), in coordination with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, will draft legislative language for consideration within the Executive Branch, to propose to Congress to update the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) to address extremist activity within the military. By July 30, 2021, based on the findings and recommendations of the report on extremist and hate group activity directed above, DoD OGC will provide a plan of action and milestones required to modify the UCMJ." "Actions to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military," Dec. 17, 2020, <https://diversity.defense.gov/Portals/51/ACTIONS%20TO%20IMPROVE%20RACIAL%20AND%20ETHNIC%20DIVERSITY%20AND%20INCLUSION%20IN%20THE%20U.S.%20MILITARY%20OSD011769-20%20RES%20Final.pdf>.

beliefs. All service branch recruiters should receive uniform training on how to detect extremist activity among recruits and newly inducted servicemembers, including training on identifying symbols and tattoos associated with hate groups and extremists that should raise red flags about a particular recruit. Consistent with privacy protections, steps must be taken to ensure procedures are in place for documenting disciplinary actions and sharing that information as a servicemember moves from one duty station to another.

5. The Department of Defense should immediately rename the 10 U.S. Army bases named for Confederate leaders.⁷⁹ Despite a veto threat from former President Donald Trump,⁸⁰ under the leadership of Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representatives Anthony Brown and Don Bacon, the FY 2021 NDAA included a provision requiring the Secretary of Defense to establish a commission “relating to assigning, modifying, or removing of names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia to assets of the Department of Defense that commemorate the Confederate States of America or any person who served voluntarily with the Confederate States of America”—and to complete that work in not more than three years.⁸¹ However, there is no reason to wait three years to rename these 10 Army bases, along with two dozen other ships, roads, buildings, and memorials named after Confederate leaders.⁸²
6. Expand existing Marine Corps⁸³ and Navy⁸⁴ prohibitions against the display of the Confederate battle flag and other racist symbols in workspaces, offices, vehicles, and vessels to apply across all service branches.
7. Establish and integrate anti-racist programming, courses, and training against white supremacy and extremism for all students, faculty, and administrators at U.S. service academies—designed to facilitate a culture of respect where expressions of hate speech or other hateful behaviors are unacceptable and clearly responded to by leadership.
8. Institute annual service branch voluntary, confidential climate surveys to enable military personnel to anonymously report their exposure to white supremacy and extremist views during their service. A report based on the surveys, focused on the erosion of unit cohesion and the impact exposure to white supremacy and extremism has on good order,

⁷⁹ The 10 U.S. Army posts named in honor of Confederate generals are Camp Beauregard and Fort Polk in Louisiana; Fort Benning and Fort Gordon in Georgia; Fort Bragg in North Carolina; Fort A.P. Hill, Fort Lee and Fort Pickett in Virginia; Fort Rucker in Alabama, and Fort Hood in Texas.

⁸⁰ John M. Donnelly, “Lawmakers line up showdown with Trump over Confederate base names,” *Roll Call*, Dec. 2, 2020, <https://www.rollcall.com/2020/12/02/lawmakers-line-up-showdown-with-trump-over-confederate-base-names/>.

⁸¹ H.R. 6935, <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116/congress/house-bill/6935/text>.

⁸² “Whose Heritage? SPLC reports over 160 Confederate symbols removed in 2020,” Feb. 23, 2021, Southern Poverty Law Center, <https://www.splcenter.org/presscenter/splc-reports-over-160-confederate-symbols-removed-2020>.

⁸³ Removal Public Displays of the Confederate Battle Flag, U.S. Marine Corps, MARADMIN Number: 331/20, June 5, 2020, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/2210513/removal-public-displays-of-the-confederate-battle-flag/>.

⁸⁴ Geoff Ziezulewicz, “CNO Says No More Confederate Battle Flags in Public Spaces and Work Areas,” *Navy Times*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2020/06/09/cno-says-no-more-confederate-battle-flags-in-public-spaces-and-work-areas/>.

discipline, morale, and readiness, should be made available to the public annually, like the Department of Defense's Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies.⁸⁵

9. There is a significant shortage of research focused on a holistic, whole-of-government examination of extremism in the military.⁸⁶ The Department of Defense should allow vetted academic researchers with strong track records on radicalization and extremism access to enlisted servicemembers, so they may research this dangerous phenomena and produce reports offering empirical guidance and lessons learned.⁸⁷ These reports, along with the expanded, anonymous climate surveys and incident data collected and made public on both hate crimes (under the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990⁸⁸) and violations of existing policies related to white supremacy or other forms of extremism, should be used to inform the creation of evidence-informed trainings intended to inoculate against radicalization at entry, throughout one's military career, and as veterans reenter into civilian life.
10. Expand recruitment efforts to underrepresented communities and dismantle barriers to equality and advancement opportunities for all service branches and military academies. Last summer, the Navy undertook a widescale review of issues "that detract from Navy readiness, such as racism, sexism and other structural and interpersonal biases to attain significant, sustainable I&D [Inclusion and Diversity]-related reform." The Navy's recently published Task Force One Navy report⁸⁹ promotes a series of recommendations designed to improve equality in the service and promote productive and honest conversations about race, diversity, and inclusion. That comprehensive effort is worthy of replication by other service branches.
11. Implement a promotion system that ensures a more transparent, equitable, and diverse path to senior positions. Part of that promotion review process should include an updated evaluation of any affiliations or expressions of extremism, racism, and discrimination by the candidate.

⁸⁵ Department of Defense press release, "DOD Releases Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies," Jan. 30, 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2069838/dod-releases-annual-report-on-sexual-harassment-and-violence-at-the-military-se/>.

⁸⁶ "At a strategic level, the military is fighting this battle blind. Only two studies have been commissioned to look at this problem specifically—one in the active-duty Army and one in the Air National Guard—and both are more than two decades old. Like sexual harassment, extremism among the troops may not be reported; its pervasiveness may not be evident until one goes looking." See Heather Williams, "How to Root Out Extremism in the US Military," *Defense One*, Feb. 1, 2021, <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2021/02/how-root-out-extremism-us-military/171744/>.

⁸⁷ Cynthia Miller-Idriss and Daniel Koehler, "A Plan to Beat Back the Far Right: Violent Extremism in America Demands a Social Response," *Foreign Affairs*, Feb. 3, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-02-03/plan-beat-back-far-right>.

⁸⁸ Hate Crime Statistics Act, 28 USC § 534 (1990).

⁸⁹ Task Force One Navy, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/26/2002570959/-1/-1/1/TASK%20FORCE%20ONE%20NAVY%20FINAL%20REPORT.PDF?fbclid=IwAR2Nd3W27VxCSRDv99frV8tZiygNNRSUZIQCqFPVKHcr9PUUKW7eqR63CU>.

Thank you for holding this hearing. We deeply appreciate the Committee's attention to the issue of extremism in the Armed Forces and look forward to working with you as you continue to focus on this important issue.

Lecia Brooks
Chief of Staff, Southern Poverty Law Center

Lecia Brooks is the chief of staff for the SPLC, where she provides counsel to senior leadership, assists with strategic planning and works with people from across the organization to ensure the SPLC's success, whether it is achieving long-term goals or maintaining effective daily operations.

Before her current role, Brooks served as the SPLC's chief workplace transformation officer, where she supported leadership and staff efforts to build a culture of inclusiveness and ensure a continued focus on diversity and equity.

Brooks also previously served as the SPLC's outreach director, where she traveled across the U.S. and abroad to speak about hate and extremism. Earlier, she was director of the SPLC's Civil Rights Memorial Center, an interpretive experience designed to provide visitors to the Civil Rights Memorial with a deeper understanding of the civil rights movement.

Brooks, who joined the SPLC in 2004, has a wealth of experience in diversity advocacy training for corporations and nonprofit organizations, including Walmart, Lyft, Pixar, the Salzburg Seminar, and the Newark Public Library.

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 117th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), and contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing. Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5) also requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose whether they are a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing. As a matter of committee policy, the House Committee on Armed Services further requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of any contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with any organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number), will be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee. Witnesses may list additional grants, contracts, or payments on additional sheets, if necessary. Please complete this form electronically.

Hearing Date: March 24th, 2021

Hearing Subject:

Extremism in the Armed Forces

Witness name: Lecia Brooks

Position/Title: Chief of Staff

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)



Individual



Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:

Southern Poverty Law Center

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2021

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2020

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2019

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2018

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

Foreign Government Contract, Grant, or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants), or payments originating from a foreign government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2021

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2020

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2019

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2018

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

Fiduciary Relationships: If you are a fiduciary of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

Organization or entity	Brief description of the fiduciary relationship
None	

Organization or Entity Contract, Grant or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants) or payments originating from an organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months, please provide the following information:

2021

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2020

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2019

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2018

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			



Written Statement of First Liberty Institute

Michael Berry
General Counsel & Director of Military Affairs

EXTREMISM IN THE ARMED FORCES

Submitted to the House Armed Services Committee

March 24, 2021

To Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, and Committee Members:

On behalf of First Liberty Institute, thank you for the privilege of presenting testimony regarding Extremism in the Armed Forces.

As the nation's largest legal organization solely dedicated to defending religious liberty for all Americans, First Liberty represents clients of all faiths, and we speak for the majority of military chaplain faith groups. I am privileged to serve as General Counsel for First Liberty, and I am equally privileged to serve as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, although this testimony is offered only in my civilian capacity.

First Liberty urges this Committee to maintain a strong and diverse military while safeguarding the constitutional rights of service members. A truly diverse military means one that is open and welcoming to all who meet the standards for service. It also means a rejection of any attempt to weaponize anti-extremism in order to target a religious belief or worldview of which those in authority disapprove. Specifically, the prohibition against extremism should not be extended to thoughts or beliefs such that someone's religion, belief, or political persuasion is vilified and made criminal. Instead, we should focus on identifying and removing those who use, threaten, or advocate violence to accomplish their objectives.

Unless the Congress and the Department of Defense take adequate precautions to protect service member First Amendment rights, we risk politicizing the military and unnecessarily exposing the government to litigation.

Our service members are often thrust into complex, stressful environments in which they are surrounded by people who look, believe, and think nothing like them. This is a feature of military service, not a defect. When I deployed to Afghanistan, I served with many whose beliefs and lifestyles differ greatly from my own. And I would proudly do it again. I observed first-hand that diversity truly makes our military stronger and more capable. Put simply, protecting free speech and religious freedom in our military is a matter of national security.

Americans serve for many reasons. Some are motivated by patriotism, others by a sense of adventure, and others still by the promise of a rewarding career. But statistically speaking, one of the most common traits among service members is religious belief. According to available data, American males who identify as "highly religious" are among those most likely to join the military.¹

The beauty of America's military is that, no matter one's background, those who serve are united by a cause much greater than oneself. America's service members personify the *e pluribus unum*—"out of many, one"—that adorns our currency and our nation's Great Seal.

My own motivation to join the Marine Corps was my love of country. I have traveled to and even lived in foreign lands, and I am convinced that there is no greater nation on earth than the United States.

As a first-generation Asian-American, however, I am also acutely aware that there was a time when those of my ethnicity were viewed with suspicion as disloyal and as posing a threat to the nation, even if we sought to prove our worth through military service. Recent, tragic events give me pause to question whether some might still question my Americanness purely because of my ethnicity.

¹ Burdette, *et al*, *Serving God and Country? Religious Involvement and Military Service Among Young Adult Men*, Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Thankfully, those who advocate or incite violence against others because of their race, their ethnicity, or their religion are rare. First Liberty fully supports all efforts to remove such people from the military. Indeed, no one wants to see true extremists gone from the armed forces more than those who serve.

Nevertheless, we must warn against a significant danger associated with recent efforts to eradicate extremism from the ranks, no matter how well-intentioned they might be. Attempting to expand the definition of extremism to punish thoughts or beliefs is not only unconstitutional, but it will harm our military.

Historically, our nation has drawn a sharp distinction between belief and conduct. The Supreme Court has acknowledged that while protection of the former is “absolute,” protection of the latter “cannot be.”² This is also true within the military.

Since the founding of our nation, service members have been held to a higher standard of conduct than their civilian counterparts. There is no question that a service member who acts upon their extremist ideology can be punished. Both the Uniform Code of Military Justice and Department of Defense regulations prohibit extremist conduct within the military, and our military justice system routinely prosecutes violators. But we do not criminalize thought or belief. Quite the contrary, we have always sought to protect the right of service members to hold religious and political beliefs, whether or not we agree with those beliefs.

The nation’s highest military court agreed with this principle, stating “we must be sensitive to protection of the principle of free thought—not free thought for those who agree with us, but freedom for the thought we hate.”³ And as General Douglas MacArthur famously stated in defense of Colonel William “Billy” Mitchell, a service member “should not be silenced for being at variance with his superiors in rank and with accepted doctrine.”⁴

There may, of course, be circumstances and occasions on which a service member does not act on his or her extremist ideology, but instead engages in speech or expression to advance their views. Confronting offensive speech is neither new nor novel.

More than a century ago, as the fear of socialist propaganda gripped the nation, Justice Holmes elucidated the “clear and present danger” standard to determine when speech may be criminalized.⁵ A half century later, during the height of the Red Scare, the Supreme Court modified that standard to criminalize speech that is likely to produce or incite “imminent lawless action.”⁶ Although a lower threshold for criminality exists for service members, speech must interfere with the military’s ability to accomplish its mission in order to be punishable.⁷ Otherwise, it is protected speech.

In other words, the First Amendment counsels against prohibiting thoughts and speech that fall short of advocating or inciting violence or lawlessness, even if those thoughts or speech are abhorrent. Indeed, the First Amendment would be entirely unnecessary were we only concerned with protecting popular ideas and words.

There is also the risk that what is popular or acceptable today might become tomorrow’s thought-crime. This is especially true when the definition of extremism is broadened to encompass nearly anything with

² *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296, 303-04 (1940).

³ *United States v. Priest*, 21 C.M.A. 564, 570 (C.M.A. 1972).

⁴ MacArthur, Douglas (1964), *Reminiscences of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur*.

⁵ *Schenck v. United States*, 249 U.S. 47 (1919).

⁶ *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, 395 U.S. 444 (1969).

⁷ *United States v. Wilcox*, 66 M.J. 442 (C.A.A.F. 2008).

which those in authority disagree. Recent and troubling incidents within the Department of Defense offer a cautionary tale.

As you are likely aware, Department of Defense equal opportunity officials are trained at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI). First Liberty was shocked to discover that DEOMI instructors were taught to provide the following training to service members with respect to extremism in the military:

Nowadays, instead of dressing in sheets or publicly espousing hate messages, many extremists will talk of individual liberties, states' rights, and how to make the world a better place.

The tragic irony is that those who believe in "individual liberties" and "making the world a better place" are often motivated by those very beliefs to serve. In fact, if belief in individual liberties and federalism is now considered "extremist," then we Americans should scrap the Constitution and the Bill of Rights—the very documents we pledge to defend and protect.

First Liberty also obtained a "screenshot" of an unclassified slide from a U.S. Army training presentation. The slide is entitled "Religious Extremism," and it purports to identify religious extremist groups. Included among those listed are Al Qaeda, Hamas, and the Ku Klux Klan, groups that use or advocate violence to accomplish their objectives and are therefore rightly classified as extremists. But also included are Evangelical Christianity and Catholicism, who most assuredly do not advocate violence. Surely, the fact that Evangelical Christians and Catholics hold fast to millennia-old views on marriage and human sexuality does not make them extremists who are unfit to serve.

At a time of turmoil and instability, during which our nation faces many external threats, DEOMI's message is inappropriate and offensive to our service members and those they defend.

On February 5, 2021, Secretary of Defense Austin issued a Stand-Down to Address Extremism in the Ranks. Few, if any, will argue with Secretary Austin's stated goal of purging "supremacists" and "extremists" from the services. But to date, the Department of Defense has not defined those or other terms. Moreover, the Department has yet to provide any assurance that Evangelical Christians and Catholics will not, once again, be labeled and targeted as extremists.

Evangelical Christianity and Catholicism might not be popular within DEOMI or the Pentagon, but to label them as extremists is not only wrong, but it undermines our national security. Those two groups combined comprise a substantial majority of the force, and as stated above, they are among the most likely candidates to serve.

Labeling service members of faith as "extremists" is to declare them unwelcome, which will only hurt our recruiting and retention efforts. It also creates a de facto hostile work environment that deters service members and dependents from adoption or support of the religious values that contribute in positive and direct ways to our mission. Instead, we should be seeking to identify, recruit, and retain those who are willing and able to serve, regardless of their religious beliefs.

The threat of radical extremists infiltrating our ranks is far outweighed by the threat to our Constitution if we allow partisanship or popularity to dictate policy.

In conclusion, First Liberty encourages the Congress to hold the Department of Defense accountable to the Constitutional requirements of free speech and religious freedom. We must ensure that these bedrock principals of American virtue are not only protected, but cherished.

DEOMI
366 Tuskegee Airmen Dr.
Patrick AFB, FL 32925

EOAC STUDENT GUIDE
DATE: April 2012



EOAC - 3150

EXTREMISM

FOR TRAINING PURPOSES ONLY

DO NOT USE ON THE JOB

LESSON EMPHASIS

This lesson will focus on awareness and current issues requiring the attention of future Equal Opportunity Advisors. It will also provide information that describes sources of extremism information, definitions, recruitment of DoD personnel, common themes in extremist ideologies, common characteristics of extremist organizations, DoD policies, and command functions regarding extremist activities.

RECOMMENDED READING

Seven Stage Hate Model, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin March

OPTIONAL READING

Secretary of the Army's Task Force on Extremist Activities Reports
Threat of Extremist Groups in The Military
Timothy McVeigh
WSCA Map of Hate Groups

The following references are additional sources for current extremism information:

- Anti-Defamation League - www.adl.org
- Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism - www.hatemonitor.csusb.edu
- Know Gangs - www.knowgangs.com
- Political Research Associates - www.publiceye.org
- Southern Poverty Law Center - www.splcenter.org
- Teaching Tolerance - www.tolerance.org

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4. Halle, L. J. (1972). *The ideological imagination*. Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books.
5. Hate group numbers up by 54% since 2000. (Feb. 2009). *Southern Poverty Law Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.splcenter.org/news/item.jsp?aid=366#>
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8. U.S. Department of Defense. (2009). *Guidelines for handling dissident and protest activities among members of the Armed Forces* (DoD Directive 1325.6). Retrieved from <http://handle.dtic.mil/100.2/ADA320448>

LESSON SYLLABUS

Sample Behaviors	Level of Learning	Performance Measure
Define key terms associated with extremism	K	CRT
Identify the seven stages of hate	K	CRT
Describe the traits associated with extremism	K	CRT
Describe extremist ideologies	K	CRT
State extremist organizations' recruiting motives toward DoD personnel	K	CRT
Describe strategies to combat extremism in the military	K	CRT
Knowledge = K Comprehension = C Application = A CRT = Criterion Referenced Test W = Written Assignment SGE = Small Group Experience PE = Presentation Evaluation		

STUDENT GUIDE INTRODUCTION

As an EOA, it is important to understand and recognize extremism. While extremist groups may seek to join the military and to recruit military members to their causes, military members must reject participation in organizations that promote supremacist causes. Knowing about extremist groups will help an EOA combat extremism in the military.

The following topics will be covered in this lesson:

- Definition of the key terms associated with extremism.
- Identification of the seven stages of hate.
- How to recognize traits associated with extremism.
- Describe extremist ideologies.
- State extremist organizations' recruiting motives toward DoD personnel.
- Description of strategies to combat extremism in the military.

A. Definitions

1. Introduction
 - All nations have an ideology, something in which they believe. When a political ideology falls outside the norms of a society, it is known as extremism. When extremists take their ideology to the next level and believe that it is the only right ideology to follow, it becomes supremacism.
2. **Ideology** – A set of political beliefs about the nature of people and society; an organized collection of ideas about the best and most appropriate way to live.
3. **Extremism** – A term used to describe the actions or ideologies of individuals or groups who take a political idea to its limits, regardless of unfortunate repercussions, and show intolerance toward all views other than their own.
4. **Extremist** – A person who advocates the use of force or violence; advocates supremacist causes based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or national origin; or otherwise engages to illegally deprive individuals or groups of their civil rights.
5. **Supremacism** – The belief that a particular race, religion, gender, species, belief system, or culture is superior to others and entitles those who identify with it to dominate, control, or rule those who do not. A person who believes that a certain group is or should be supreme is a **supremacist**.

6. Prohibited Activities

- a. Individuals who hold extremist views are in conflict with the standards expected of all military members, and participation in extremism is inconsistent with the duties of military service.
- b. According to DoD Directive 1325.6, military members are prohibited from any of the following activities:
 - Participating in organizations that espouse supremacist causes.
 - Attempting to create illegal discrimination based on race, creed, color, sex, religion, or national origin.
 - Advocating the use of force or violence.
 - Engaging in efforts to deprive individuals of their civil rights.
- c. Active participation in any of the activities listed below **with regard to extremist organizations** is incompatible with military service and is, therefore, prohibited. This includes:
 - Publicly demonstrating or rallying.
 - Fundraising.
 - Recruiting and training members.
 - Organizing or leading such organizations.
- d. Furthering the objectives of extremist organizations is viewed as detrimental to the good order, discipline, or mission accomplishment of the unit and is, therefore, subject to appropriate disciplinary action. As an EOA, you should assist the unit commanders in being vigilant about the existence of such activities.
- e. While these activities are prohibited by members of the military, there are no such prohibitions on the general public. EOAs should become familiar with the various groups and organizations that are outside of the gate.

B. Stages of Hate

1. Introduction

- As shown so far, the extremist groups are closely related to hate groups. Understanding the stages of how hate groups develop can help you, as an EOA, watch for the behaviors that may indicate a hate or extremist group within the military.

2. Hate Stages

- a. Schaffer and Navarro have identified seven stages that hate groups go through. If unimpeded, haters will pass through these seven successive stages without skipping a stage.

- b. In the first four stages, haters vocalize their beliefs. In the last three stages, haters act on their beliefs. As an EOA, being able to assess the stage of hate a person expresses can help you determine the best intervention strategy required to deter the development from continuing.
3. **Stage 1: Grouping** – Irrational haters seldom hate alone. They feel compelled, almost driven, to entreat others to hate as they do. Peer validation bolsters a sense of self-worth and, at the same time, prevents introspection, which reveals personal insecurities. Further, individuals who are otherwise ineffective become empowered when they join groups, which also provide anonymity and diminished accountability.
4. **Stage 2: Defining** – Hate groups form identities through symbols, rituals, and mythologies, which enhance the members' status and, at the same time, degrade the object of their hate. For example, skinhead groups may adopt the swastika, the iron cross, the Confederate flag, and other supremacist symbols. Group-specific symbols or clothing often differentiate hate groups. Group rituals, such as hand signals and secret greetings, further fortify members. Hate groups, especially skinhead groups, usually incorporate some form of self-sacrifice, which allows haters to willingly jeopardize their well-being for the greater good of the cause. Giving one's life to a cause provides the ultimate sense of value and worth to life. Skinheads often see themselves as soldiers in a race war.
5. **Stage 3: Disparaging** – Hate is the glue that binds haters to one another and to a common cause. By verbally debasing the object of their hate, haters enhance their self-image, as well as their group status. In skinhead groups, racist song lyrics and hate literature provide an environment where hate flourishes. In fact, researchers have found that the life span of aggressive impulses increases with ideation. In other words, the more often a person thinks about aggression, the greater the chance for aggressive behavior to occur. Thus, after constant verbal denigration, haters progress to the next, more openly hostile and bitter, stage.
6. **Stage 4: Taunting** – Hate, by its nature, changes incrementally. Time cools the fire of hate, thus forcing the hater to look inward. To avoid introspection, haters use ever-increasing degrees of rhetoric and violence to maintain high levels of agitation. Taunts and offensive gestures serve this purpose. In this stage, skinheads typically shout racial slurs from moving cars or from afar. Nazi salutes and other hand signals often accompany racial epithets. Racist graffiti also begins to appear in areas where skinheads loiter. Most skinhead groups claim turf proximate to the neighborhoods in which they live. One study indicated that a majority of hate crimes occur when the hate target migrates through the hate group's turf.
7. **Stage 5: Attacking without weapons** – This stage is critical because it differentiates vocally abusive haters from physically abusive ones. In this stage, hate groups become more aggressive, prowling their turf seeking vulnerable targets. Violence coalesces hate groups and further isolates them from mainstream society. Skinheads, almost without exception, attack in groups and target single victims. Research by the Southern Poverty

Law Center, the FBI, and the Anti-Defamation League has shown that bias crimes are twice as likely to cause injury and four times as likely to result in hospitalization as compared to non-bias crimes. In addition to physical violence, the element of thrill seeking is introduced in Stage 5. The adrenaline high intoxicates the attackers. The initial adrenaline surge lasts for several minutes; however, the effects of adrenaline keep the body in a state of heightened alert for up to several days. Each successive anger-provoking thought or action builds on residual adrenaline and triggers a more violent response than the one that originally initiated the sequence. Anger builds on anger. The adrenaline high combined with hate becomes a deadly combination. Hardcore skinheads keep themselves at a level where the slightest provocation triggers aggression.

8. **Stage 6: Attacking with weapons** – Some attackers use firearms to commit hate crimes, but skinheads prefer weapons such as broken bottles, baseball bats, blunt objects, screwdrivers, and belt buckles. These types of weapons require the attacker to be close to the victim, which further demonstrates the depth of personal anger. Attackers can discharge firearms at a distance, thus precluding personal contact. Close-in onslaughts require the assailants to see their victim eye-to-eye and to become bloodied during the assault. Hands-on violence allows skinheads to express their hate in a way a gun cannot. Personal contact empowers and fulfills a deep-seated need to have dominance over others.
9. **Stage 7: Destroying** – The ultimate goal of haters is to destroy the object of their hate. Mastery over life and death imbues the hater with godlike power and omnipotence, which, in turn, facilitate further acts of violence. With this power comes a great sense of self-worth and value, the very qualities haters lack. However, in reality, hate physically and psychologically destroys both the hater and the hated.

C. Hate Groups and Hate Symbols

1. Introduction

- While many extremist groups advocate violence, some extremists avoid violence at all costs. So, one cannot say that the terms extremist and hate are synonymous. However, while not all extremist groups are hate groups, all hate groups are extremist groups.
- According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), there were 932 hate groups active in the United States in 2009. Many of these groups follow the same ideologies, but do not necessarily work together or cooperate with each other. Extremists tend to be confrontational, so fights within a group are not uncommon. After an argument, *dissidents* may form another competing group or organization, or join a different one.
- As an EOA, it is impossible for you to be knowledgeable about each and every group. You can, however, familiarize yourself with the common extremist beliefs. Here are a few of these groups.

NOTE: The descriptions that follow are provided by the Southern Poverty Law Center and are given as generalizations only and may not apply to every group.

2. **Neo-Confederate** – Primarily celebrate Southern culture and the Civil War; some factions embrace racist attitudes toward Blacks, and some favor White separatism. The neo-Confederate movement includes a number of organizations that generally share the goals of preserving Confederate monuments, honoring the Confederate battle flag, and lauding what is judged to be Southern culture. Many have close ties to the White supremacist League of the South (LOS).
3. **Black Separatist** – Typically oppose integration and racial intermarriage; want separate institutions or even a separate nation for Blacks. Most forms of Black separatism are strongly anti-White and anti-Semitic, and a number of religious versions assert that Blacks are the Biblical “chosen people” of God. Other groups espousing the same beliefs would be considered racist. The same criteria should be applied to all groups, regardless of color.
4. **Ku Klux Klan** – Primarily against Black Americans, its members have also attacked Jews, immigrants, and Catholics. It typically sees itself as a Christian organization fighting for civil rights for Whites and is historically violent as a vigilante group. With its long history of violence, the KKK is the most infamous and oldest of American hate groups.
5. **Neo-Nazi** – Share a hatred for Jews and a love for Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany; also hate other minorities and homosexuals; believe in Christian White supremacy. While its roots are in Europe, the links with American neo-Nazi groups are strong and growing stronger.
 - a. **Racist Skinheads** – Typically form a violent element of the White supremacist movement and have often been referred to as the “shock troops” of the hoped-for revolution. The classic skinhead look is a shaved head, black Doc Martens boots, jeans with suspenders, and an array of typically racist tattoos. A prominent racist skinhead term is “14/88.” The 14 stands for the “14 words” slogan coined by David Lane, who is serving a 190-year sentence for his part in the assassination of a Jewish talk show host: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children.” The 88 means “Heil Hitler,” as H is the eighth letter of the alphabet.
6. **White Nationalists** – Espouse White supremacist or White separatist ideologies, often focusing on the alleged inferiority of non-Whites. Groups listed in a variety of other categories (e.g., Ku Klux Klan, neo-Confederate, neo-Nazi, racist skinhead, etc.) could also be fairly described as White nationalists.
7. Hate Symbols
 - a. As an EOA, it is important that you are knowledgeable of and alert to the symbols, logos, and tattoos that extremist groups use to identify themselves and their group

affiliation. Being aware of these symbols and what they mean can assist you in combating extremism in the military.

- b. While some people may use or display extremist symbols in ignorance, extremists use these symbols to display a sense of power and belonging. Symbols are also a quick way of identifying others who share their beliefs.
- c. Additional information about hate groups and extremist symbols can be found in your student guide and on the Internet. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) maintains a database of hate group symbols. As an EOA, you should familiarize yourself with the symbols of hate; learn to recognize the symbols and what they mean so you are better prepared to support the military standards of conduct and eliminate extremism in the military.

D. Extremists Traits

1. What type of person belongs to an extremist group or follows an extremist ideology?
The terms extremism or extremist are almost always applied by others to a group rather than by a group labeling itself. People within an extremist group will deny that they practice or advocate violence; instead they would more likely call themselves political radicals.
2. According to George and Wilcox, there are a number of specific traits or behaviors that tend to represent the extremist style. As a caution, we are all fallible human beings, and some of us may resort to these behaviors from time to time without bad intentions. With extremists, these lapses are not occasional; rather, they are habitual and a strongly established part of an extremist's character.
 - a. **Character assassination**
Extremists often attack the character of an opponent rather than deal with the facts or issues raised. They will question motives, qualifications, past associations, alleged values, personality, looks, and mental health as a diversion from the issues under consideration.
 - b. **Name calling and labeling**
Extremists are quick to resort to taunts (e.g., pervert, racist, crackpot) to label and condemn opponents and to divert others from listening to their arguments.
 - c. **Irresponsive sweeping generalizations**
Extremists tend to make sweeping claims or judgments with little to no evidence, often confusing similarity with sameness. That is, they assume that because two or more things are alike in some respects that they are alike in all respects.
 - d. **Inadequate proof behind assertions**
Extremists tend to be very fuzzy about what constitutes proof for their assertions and tend to get caught up in logical fallacies where they assume that a prior event explains

a subsequent occurrence simply because of their before-and-after relationship. They tend to project wished-for conclusions and exaggerate the significance of information that confirms their prejudices and discredit or ignore information that contradicts them.

- e. **Tendency to view opponents and critics as essentially evil**
Extremists feel that their opponents hold differing views because they are bad, immoral, dishonest, hateful, cruel, prejudiced, etc. and not merely because they simply disagree, see matters differently, or are mistaken.
- f. **Dualism worldview**
Extremists tend to see the world in terms of absolute good and evil, for them or against them, with no middle ground or intermediate position. All issues are ultimately moral issues of right and wrong, good or bad, with the right and good positions coinciding with their interests. Their slogan is often “Those who are not with me are against me.”
- g. **Tendency to argue by intimidation**
Extremists tend to frame their arguments in such a way as to intimidate others into accepting their premises and conclusions. To disagree with them is to ally oneself with the devil or to give aid and comfort to the enemy. They tend to be very judgmental and moralizing, allowing them to define the parameters of the debate by keeping their opponents on the defensive.
- h. **Use of slogans, buzzwords, and thought-stopping clichés**
For many extremists, shortcuts in thinking and in reasoning matters out seem necessary to avoid troublesome facts and compelling counterarguments. Simple slogans substitute for more complex abstractions.
- i. **Assumption of moral superiority over others**
The most obvious assumptions are claims of racial or ethnic superiority—a master race. Less obvious are claims of ennoblement because of alleged victimhood, a special relationship with God, or membership in a special or elite class and a kind of aloof high-minded snobbishness that accrues because of the weightiness of their preoccupations, their altruism, and their willingness to sacrifice themselves (and others) to their cause.
- j. **Doomsday thinking**
Extremists often predict dire or catastrophic consequences from a situation or from a failure to follow a specific course, and they tend to exhibit a kind of crisis-mindedness. It can be a Communist takeover, a Nazi revival, nuclear war, earthquakes, floods, or the wrath of God. Whatever it is, it is just around the corner unless we follow their program and listen to their special insight and wisdom, to which only the truly enlightened have access. For extremists, any setback or defeat is the beginning of the end.

- k. **Belief that it's okay to do bad things in the service of a "good" cause**
Extremists may deliberately lie or otherwise distort, misquote, slander, defame, or libel their opponents and/or critics; engage in censorship or repression; or undertake violence in special cases. This is done with little or no remorse as long as it is in the service of defeating the Communists, Fascists, or whomever. Defeating an enemy becomes an all-encompassing goal to which other values are subordinate. With extremists, the end justifies the means.
- l. **Tendency to personalize hostility**
Extremists often wish for the personal bad fortune of their enemies and celebrate when it occurs. When a critic or an adversary dies or has a serious illness, a bad accident, or personal legal problems, extremists often rejoice and chortle about how he or she deserved it. For example, right-wing extremists celebrated the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and leftists agonized because George Wallace survived an assassination attempt. In each instance, their hatred was not only directed against ideas, but also against individual human beings.
- m. **Emphasis on emotional responses, less so on reasoning and logical analysis**
Extremists have an unspoken reverence for propaganda, which they may call education or consciousness-raising. Symbolism plays an exaggerated role in their thinking, and they tend to think imprecisely and metaphorically. Effective extremists tend to be effective propagandists. Propaganda differs from education in that the former teaches one what to think, and the latter teaches one how to think clearly.
- n. **Hypersensitivity and vigilance**
Extremists perceive hostile innuendo in even casual and innocuous comments, imagine rejection and antagonism concealed in honest disagreement and dissent, and see latent subversion, anti-Semitism, perversion, racism, disloyalty, and so on in innocent gestures and ambiguous behaviors. Although few extremists are actually clinically paranoid, many of them adopt a paranoid style with its attendant projective mechanisms, hostility, and distrust.
- o. **Use of supernatural rationales for beliefs and actions**
Some extremists, particularly those involved in cults and religious movements, claim some kind of supernatural rationale for their beliefs and actions; their movement or cause, they believe, is ordained or looked upon favorably by God.
- p. **Advocacy of double standards**
Extremists generally tend to judge themselves or their interest group in terms of their intentions, which they tend to view generously, and their critics and opponents by their acts, which they tend to view very critically. They would like you to accept their assertions on faith, but they demand proof for yours.

E. Extremist Ideologies

1. Introduction

- As noted, an ideology is a set of political beliefs about the nature of people and society. People who are committed to an ideology seek not only to persuade but to recruit others to their belief. In U.S. history, there are many examples of extremist ideologies and movements. The colonists who sought to free themselves from British rule and the Confederate states who sought to secede from the Northern states are just two examples.
- While not all ideologists are violent in nature, it is characteristic of ideology to be action-oriented and to regard action in terms of a military analogy. How often have you heard words such as struggle, resist, march, victory, and overcome when reading about or talking to ideologists about their beliefs?

2. Ideologies

- a. **Nationalism** – The policy of asserting that the interests of one’s own nation are separate from the interests of other nations or the common interest of all nations. Many nationalist groups take it a step further and believe that their national culture and interests are superior to any other national group.
- b. **Supremacy** – The belief that one’s race or ethnicity is superior to all others and should dominate society. Supremacy, as with racial supremacies in general, has frequently resulted in anti-Black and anti-Semitic violence.
- c. **Separatism** – Setting oneself or others apart based on culture, ethnicity, race, or religion.
- d. **Anarchism** – A political ideology that considers the state to be unnecessary, harmful, or undesirable. National anarchists appeal to youths in part by avoiding the trappings of skinhead culture—light jackets, shaved heads, and combat boots—in favor of hooded sweatshirts and bandanas. They act the part of stereotypical anarchists as envisioned by most Americans outside of far-left circles: black-clad protesters wreaking havoc at political conventions and anti-globalization rallies.
- e. **Religion** – Extremist ideology based on intolerance toward other religions. Anti-Semitism is a prime example of this ideology.
- f. **Eco-Warriors** – Environmental activists who take action to fight against the exploitation of the environment or animals. An eco-warrior can be someone non-confrontational, such as a tree-sitter, or someone who engages in direct action.

3. Historical events

- a. ***Jewish Holocaust*** – In 1933, after years of struggle and repeatedly blaming Jews for Germany's defeat in World War I, Adolf Hitler and his Nazi followers came to power. The genocide of European Jews and others by the Nazis during World War II is one of the most radical examples of extremism. Concentration camps were built to house the Jews, who were incarcerated and forced into labor. Eventually, extermination camps were built for the sole purpose of killing the Jews, usually in gas chambers, although some were killed in mass shootings and by other means. The bodies were burned in crematoria and the ashes buried or scattered. Over 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust. This reign of anti-Semitism finally crashed with the suicide death of Adolf Hitler; 22 surviving top Nazis were charged with crimes against humanity. The extremist ideologies of supremacy, nationalism, and religion apply to this event.
- b. ***Cambodia Genocide*** – In April of 1975, Pol Pot, once leader of the Cambodian Communist Party, effectively seized control of Cambodia by marching into Phnom Penh. Once in power, Pol Pot expelled all foreigners and began a systematic effort to purify the country. Millions of Cambodians were forced to work in the fields, where they began dying from overwork, malnutrition, and disease. Individuals accused of treason, along with their families, were brought to S-21, a prison where they were photographed, tortured until they confessed, and executed. Of the 14,200 people imprisoned at S-21, only 7 are known to have survived. After Phnom Penh was liberated by the Vietnamese Army in 1979, S-21 was converted to the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide. The extremist ideologies of supremacy, separatism, and nationalism apply to this event.
- c. ***Sudan Holocaust*** – Since 1983, the Northern fundamentalist Muslim government of Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, has been waging war against the mostly Christian South. The northern government has been killing, displacing, and enslaving the African Christians. Over 1.9 million civilians have died, and over 4 million have been forced to flee their homes. The victims are Christians, moderate Muslims, and African traditionalists who refuse to accept the Sudan government's policies of Arab control and conformity to Islamic rules and laws. The extremist ideologies of supremacy, nationalism, and religion apply to this event.
- d. ***Oklahoma City Bombing*** – On April 19, 1995, a massive truck bomb exploded outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people, including 19 children, and injuring over 500 others. Timothy McVeigh was convicted for this crime, putting a spotlight on a militia movement seeking to retaliate against the U.S. government for its handling of the Seventh-Day Adventist cult near Waco, Texas. The extremist ideology of anarchism applies to this event.

- e. ***Tokyo Subway Gas Attacks*** – On March 20, 1995, the group Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) attacked Tokyo's subways with sarin gas, killing 12 and injuring more than 5,000. This attack has the distinction of being the world's first mass-scale chemical terrorist attack.
- f. ***9-11*** – On September 11, 2001, a series of coordinated attacks on America by al-Qaeda followers who hijacked planes and crashed them into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon left 2,974 people dead. A fourth plane destined for Washington D.C. was taken over by passengers and crew members who willingly sacrificed their lives in order to divert the attack.

F. Recruiting Motives

1. Introduction
 - The standard hate message has not changed, but it has been packaged differently. Modern extremist groups run the gamut from the politically astute and subtle to the openly violent.
 - Nowadays, instead of dressing in sheets or publicly espousing hate messages, many extremists will talk of individual liberties, states' rights, and how to make the world a better place.
2. Recruiting Motives
 - a. Military personnel, public officials, and law enforcement officers are actively sought by extremist groups. Extremist leaders seek to recruit members with military experience to exploit their:
 - Discipline.
 - Knowledge of firearms and explosives.
 - Tactical skills.
 - Access to weapons and intelligence.
 - b. In addition, members of extremist groups like the neo-Nazis are joining the military, not to serve their country, but to receive training—specifically with regards to discipline and tactical skills—and to learn how to better defend themselves and their ideals.
 - c. Young extremists are encouraged by leaders to enlist in the military to gain access to weapons, training, and other military personnel. Some extremist groups even provide advice to their members on how to respond to questions from military recruiters.
 - d. Military members are trained to be proficient with weapons, combat tactics, and explosives, to train others in their use, and to operate in a highly disciplined culture that is focused on the organized violence of war. This is why military extremists

present an elevated threat to public safety. Even the nonviolent activities of military personnel with extremist tendencies (e.g., possessing literature, researching information via computer) can have detrimental consequences for the good order, discipline, readiness, and cohesion of military units.

G. Strategies to Combat Extremism

1. Introduction

- It is the responsibility of each and every military member to help combat extremism in the military.
- Each member should examine how his or her action or inaction can affect mission accomplishment. Just the presence of a member with extremist views can have an adverse impact on the performance of a unit. Other members who oppose or disagree with the extremist views may say or do nothing because they fear damaging the unit's cohesiveness.
- Extremists' views divide the unit into opposing factions, and the team concept required for mission accomplishment is lost.

2. Strategies

- a. Extremism is prohibited in the military in accordance with DoDD 1325.6. Combating extremism in the military begins with the individual. Each person should:
 - Examine personal viewpoints in light of military values and loyalty.
 - Reject affiliation with any extremist organizations.
 - Decline the distribution or circulation of extremist literature.
 - Encourage others to avoid extremist affiliations and views.
 - Report indicators of extremism to the appropriate command.
- b. As an EOA, you should be vigilant to the signs of extremism by paying attention to:
 - Surreptitious meetings.
 - Off-duty clothing (e.g., skinhead dress, extremist tattoos).
 - Music selections and reading materials.
 - Extremist graffiti or symbols in personal and common areas.
- c. In addition, you should assist the unit command to:
 - Educate and counsel unit members on the incompatibility of military service with extremist views.
 - Be aware of unit members' beliefs.
 - Be alert for indicators of extremist ties, views, or behaviors.

EOAC Student Guide

Extremism
Date: April 2012

- Include questions on extremism in climate assessments.
- Enforce policy on participation in extremist group activities.
- Advise unit members of the consequences for participation in extremist activities.
- Monitor information available on extremists groups, activities, and philosophies.

SUMMARY

As an EOA, it is important to understand and recognize extremism. While extremist groups may seek to join the military and to recruit military members to their causes, military members must reject participation in organizations that promote supremacist causes. Knowing about extremist groups will help you combat extremism in the military.

This lesson was designed to increase the student's understanding of extremist groups and organizations, enhancing their knowledge, thus preparing them as EOAs to deal with extremist identification and issues.

The following topics were covered in this lesson:

- Definition of the key terms associated with extremism.
- Identification of the seven stages of hate.
- How to recognize traits associated with extremism.
- Describe extremist ideologies.
- State extremist organizations' recruiting motives toward DoD personnel.
- Description of strategies to combat extremism in the military.

END OF LESSON

RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

- EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY (U.S./CHRISTIAN)
 - IKHWAN or MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD (EGYPT/MUSLIM)
 - ULTRA-ORTHODOX (ISRAEL/JUDAISM)
 - CHRISTIAN IDENTITY (U.S./CHRISTIAN)
 - AL QAEDA (TRANSNATIONAL/ISLAM)
 - HAMAS (PALESTINIAN/ISLAMIST)
 - ABU SAYYAH (PHILIPPINES/ISLAM)
 - KU KLUX KLAN (U.S./CHRISTIAN)
 - SRI RAM SENE (INDIA/HINDU)
 - CATHOLICISM (U.S./CHRISTIAN)
 - KAHANE MOVEMENT/KACH (ISRAEL/JEWISH)
 - ARMY OF GOD (U.S./CHRISTIANITY)
 - SUNNI MUSLIMS (IRAQ/ISLAM)
 - NATION OF ISLAM (U.S./ISLAM)
 - JEWISH DEFENSE LEAGUE (U.S./JUDAISM)
 - FUNDAMENTALIST CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS (U.S./MORMON)
 - HITAREE (U.S./CHRISTIAN)
- ISLAMOPHOBIA



Michael Berry
General Counsel, First Liberty Institute

Michael Berry is General Counsel for First Liberty Institute. He joined First Liberty in 2013 after serving for seven years on active duty as an attorney with the U.S. Marine Corps. Among Mr. Berry's numerous positions within the Marine Corps, he deployed to Afghanistan in 2008, and from 2009- 2012, Mr. Berry served as an Adjunct Professor of Law at the United States Naval Academy. Mr. Berry continues to proudly serve our nation as a member of the Marine Corps Reserve.

As General Counsel for First Liberty Institute, Mr. Berry is responsible for leading all aspects of First Liberty's legal operations. A recognized subject-matter expert, Mr. Berry has testified before Congress and he is routinely invited to speak across the nation about religious freedom. Mr. Berry has also been featured hundreds of times in various national media outlets.

Mr. Berry earned his bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University, and he earned his law degree from The Ohio State University.

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the House of Representatives for the 117th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), and contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing. Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5) also requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose whether they are a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing. As a matter of committee policy, the House Committee on Armed Services further requires nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of any contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or payments originating with any organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number), will be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee. Witnesses may list additional grants, contracts, or payments on additional sheets, if necessary. Please complete this form electronically.

Hearing Date: March 24, 2021

Hearing Subject:

Extremism in the Armed Forces

Witness name: Michael Berry

Position/Title: General Counsel, First Liberty Institute

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)



Individual



Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the organization or entity represented:

First Liberty Institute

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2021

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2020

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2019

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

2018

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
N/A			

Foreign Government Contract, Grant, or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants), or payments originating from a foreign government, received during the past 36 months and related to the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

2021

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2020

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2019

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2018

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

Fiduciary Relationships: If you are a fiduciary of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing, please provide the following information:

Organization or entity	Brief description of the fiduciary relationship
N/A	

Organization or Entity Contract, Grant or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or grants (including subcontracts or subgrants) or payments originating from an organization or entity, whether public or private, that has a material interest in the subject matter of the hearing, received during the past 36 months, please provide the following information:

2021

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2020

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2019

Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

2018

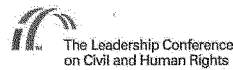
Contract/grant/ payment	Entity	Dollar value	Subject of contract, grant, or payment
N/A			

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 24, 2021

**The Leadership Conference
on Civil and Human Rights**

1620 L Street, NW 202.466.3311 voice
Suite 1100 202.466.3435 fax
Washington, DC www.civilrights.org
20036



January 19, 2021

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (The Leadership Conference), a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect civil and human rights in the United States, and the undersigned **156** organizations, we write to express our deep concern regarding proposed expansion of terrorism-related legal authority. We must meet the challenge of addressing white nationalist and far-right militia violence without causing further harm to communities already disproportionately impacted by the criminal-legal system. The Justice Department (DOJ), including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), has over 50 terrorism-related statutes it can use to investigate and prosecute criminal conduct, including white supremacist violence, as well as dozens of other federal statutes relating to hate crimes, organized crime, and violent crimes. The failure to confront and hold accountable white nationalist violence is not a question of not having appropriate tools to employ, but a failure to use those on hand. To date, DOJ has simply decided as a matter of policy and practice not to prioritize white nationalist crimes.¹ Congress should use its oversight and appropriations authorities to ensure that law enforcement appropriately focuses investigative and prosecutorial resources on white nationalist crimes.

We urge you to oppose any new domestic terrorism charge, the creation of a list of designated domestic terrorist organizations, or other expansion of existing terrorism-related authorities. We are concerned that a new federal domestic terrorism statute or list would adversely impact civil rights and — as our nation's long and disturbing history of targeting Black Activists, Muslims, Arabs, and movements for social and racial justice has shown — this new authority could be used to expand racial profiling or be wielded to surveil and investigate communities of color and political opponents in the name of national security. As Acting U.S. Attorney Michael Sherwin for the District of Columbia stated on January 12, 2021 regarding the January 6 insurrection attack on the Capitol, federal prosecutors have many existing laws at their disposal to hold violent white supremacists accountable.²

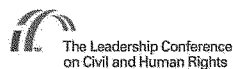
The magnitude of last week's attack demands that Congress focus on ensuring that our government addresses white nationalist violence as effectively as possible. Members of Congress should not reinforce counterterrorism policies, programs, and frameworks that are rooted in bias, discrimination, and denial or diminution of fundamental rights like due

Officers
Chair
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Women & Families
Vice Chairs
Thomas A. Saenz
Mexican American Legal
Defiance and Educational Fund
Hilary Shelton
NAACP
Secretary/Treasurer
Leo A. Saunders
American Federation of State,
County & Municipal Employees
Board of Directors
Kevin Ellis
National Congress of American Indians
Kimberly Churches
AFLW
Kristen Clarke
Lawyers' Committee for
Civil Rights Under Law
Alphonso B. David
Human Rights Campaign
Rory Gamble
International Union, UAW
Fabiana Goss Graves
National Women's Law Center
Jonathan Greenblatt
Anti-Defamation League
Mary Kay Henry
Service Employees International Union
Sherrilyn Ifill
NAACP Legal Defense and
Educational Fund, Inc.
David H. Inoué
Japanese American Citizens League
Benjamin Jealous
People for the American Way
Derrick Johnson
NAACP
Virginia Kiese
League of Women Voters of the
United States
Sumner E. Redleaf
American-Arab
Anti-Discrimination Committee
Marc Morie
National Urban League
Janet Morgan
UniteUS
Debra L. Ness
National Partnership for
Women & Families
Christian F. Nunez
National Organization for Women
Rabbi Jonah Pesner
Religious Action Center
Of Reform Judaism
Robynne Pringle
National Education Association
Lisa Riser
National Fair Housing Alliance
Anthony Romero
American Civil Liberties Union
Marilyn Tovey
American Association of
People with Disabilities
Richard L. Trumka
AFL-CIO
Randi Weingarten
American Federation of Teachers
John C. Yang
Asian American Advancing Justice |
AAJC

¹ Michael German and Sara Robinson, *Wrong Priorities on Fighting Terrorism*, The Brennan Center (Oct 31, 2018), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/wrong-priorities-fighting-terrorism>

² Department of Justice, *Acting U.S. Attorney Michael Sherwin for The District of Columbia and FBI Washington Field Office ADIC Steven D'Antuono Provide Update on Criminal Charges Related to Events at the Capitol on January 6* (Jan 12, 2021) <https://www.justice.gov/opa/video/acting-us-attorney-michael-sherwin-district-columbia-and-fbi-washington-field-office-adic>

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process. Rather, as highlighted below, Congress should focus on its oversight and appropriations authority to ensure that the federal government redirect resources towards the ever-growing white nationalist violence plaguing our country, and hold law enforcement accountable in doing so.

Law Enforcement Has the Tools to Hold White Nationalist Insurrectionists Accountable

White supremacist violence goes back to our nation's founding, and has never been appropriately addressed—and it manifested last week in an unprecedented way. On January 6, 2021, thousands of pro-Trump supporters, many of them radical, right-wing, white supremacists, unlawfully and violently broke into the nation's Capitol. The rioters, some with "Camp Auschwitz" shirts, others carrying confederate flags, and some who hung a noose on the Capitol grounds, were intent on blocking the ratification of President-elect Biden's electoral win. Some carried weapons and zip ties, reportedly to kidnap or kill members of Congress and the Vice President. Because of the violent mayhem that ensued, at least five people lost their lives and countless others were wounded. As this historic event on the nation's legislative branch by violent white nationalist insurrectionists is being investigated thoroughly, we know that our federal law enforcement officials have more than enough tools at their disposal to address the attack on the Capitol.

According to the federal government's own research and reports, white nationalist violence has been on the rise for years with the F.B.I reporting that more murders motivated by hate were recorded in 2019 than any year before.³ This 2019 data included the El Paso massacre, when a white supremacist targeted the Latino community and shot and killed 23 people after publishing a manifesto in which he embraced white nationalist and anti-immigrant hatred.⁴ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the FBI have repeatedly testified before Congress, stating that the greatest threat to US national security emanates from white supremacist violence.⁵

Yet, despite overwhelming evidence making clear the source of the threat⁶, the federal response has failed to prioritize an effective policy to combat white nationalist violence. Instead, the federal government has disproportionately targeted and surveilled Black and Brown people, including increasingly targeting Arabs and Muslims since 9/11, treating them as threats to US national and homeland security. This has led to the over-policing of these communities, including intrusions into community centers, mosques, and almost every aspect of their lives.⁷ US counter-terrorism policy has

³ FBI National Press Office, *FBI Releases 2019 NIBRS Crime Data* (Dec 9 2020), [FBI Releases 2019 NIBRS Crime Data](https://www.fbi.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/12/09/fbi-releases-2019-nibrs-crime-data) — FBI; see also Tim Arango, *Hate Crimes in U.S. Rose to Highest Level in More Than a Decade in 2019* (Nov. 16, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/16/us/hate-crime-rate.html>

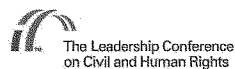
⁴ Peter Baker and Michael D. Shear, *El Paso Shooting Suspect's Manifesto Echoes Trump's Language* (Aug. 4, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/us/politics/trump-mass-shootings.html>

⁵ The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, *Letter from Civil Rights Organizations Calling for Investigation and Hearings Into DHS Coverup of White Supremacist Intelligence* (Sep 24, 2020), [House_Homeland_on_White_Supremacist_Cover_Up_092420.pdf](https://www.leadershipconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/092420.pdf) (civilrightsdocs.info)

⁶ The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, *Letter from Civil Rights Organizations Calling for Investigation and Hearings Into DHS Coverup of White Supremacist Intelligence* (Sep 24, 2020), [House_Homeland_on_White_Supremacist_Cover_Up_092420.pdf](https://www.leadershipconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/092420.pdf) (civilrightsdocs.info)

⁷ Michael German and Emmanuel Mauleón, *Fighting Far-Right Violence and Hate Crimes* (July 1st, 2019), Page 7, [Report_Far_Right_Violence.pdf](https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/reports-research/fighting-far-right-violence-and-hate-crimes) (brennancenter.org)

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devastated communities of color and religious minorities, and by failing to rein in white nationalist violence in a serious way, those same communities suffer twice over: first by being over-criminalized and securitized and second, by having the state not respond to white nationalists who target them.

What Should Congress Do?

Congress should not enact any laws creating a new crime of domestic terrorism, including the Confronting the Threats of Domestic Terrorism Act (H.R. 4192 in the 116th Congress) or any other new charges or sentencing enhancements expected to be introduced in the 117th Congress “to penalize acts of domestic terrorism.” These bills and others with similar provisions are the wrong approach because, as we have seen, they will continue to be used as vehicles to target marginalized communities as they have done since their inception.⁸ The federal government has no shortage of counterterrorism powers, and these powers have been and will be again used to unjustly target Black and Brown communities, including Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern, and South Asian communities, as well as those engaged in First Amendment-protected activities.⁹ The creation of a new federal domestic terrorism crime ignores this reality and would not address the scourge of white nationalism in this country.

Instead, Congress should use its oversight and appropriations powers to demand that federal agencies make public how they have and are now using resources to fight white supremacist violence. Moreover, Congress should support other efforts to address the white supremacy at the core of these violent attacks. At the outset, Congress should identify ways to address the white supremacist infiltration of law enforcement that was documented by the FBI. This a clear and present danger, which was highlighted at an Oversight Committee hearing last year, puts lives at risk and undermines the criminal legal system.¹⁰ Hate crimes data should be mandated and made publicly available so federal leaders, as well as those at the state and local level, can address the threat in a manner best suited to their community. Finally, the Leadership Conference encourages Congress to hold hearings featuring communities that are experiencing white nationalist violence in an effort to encourage accountability and transparency. This would allow Congress to provide communities impacted by white supremacist violence support to develop and lead their own programs to meet the needs that they identify.

Please contact Becky Monroe at monroe@civilrights.org and Iman Boukadoum at boukadoum@civilrights.org to further discuss this matter or if there are questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

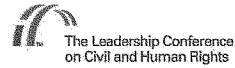
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

⁸ Brennan Center, *Countering Violent Extremism in the Trump Era* (Jun. 2018), <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/countering-violent-extremism-trump-era>

⁹ Patrick G. Eddington, *MLK and the FBI: 50 years on, secrets and surveillance still* (Apr. 2019), <https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/436437-mlk-and-the-fbi-50-years-on-secrets-and-surveillance-still>

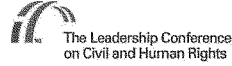
¹⁰ Press Release Rep Jamie Raskin, *Experts Warn Oversight Subcommittee that White Supremacist Infiltration of Law Enforcement Poses a Threat to Cops, Communities* (Sep. 29, 2020) <https://raskin.house.gov/media/press-releases/experts-warn-oversight-subcommittee-white-supremacist-infiltration-law>

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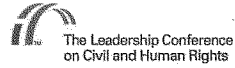
Access Now
 Act To Change
 Advancement Project, National Office
 Alabama State Association of Cooperatives
 Aleasa Word
 America's Voice
 American Civil Liberties Union
 American Friends Service Committee
 American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
 Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
 Amnesty International USA
 Andrew Goodman Foundation
 ANYAHS Inc.
 Appleseed Foundation
 Arab American Institute
 Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC)
 Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
 Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
 Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
 Augustus F. Hawkins Foundation
 Autistic Self Advocacy Network
 Bend the Arc Jewish Action
 Black Alliance for Just Immigration
 Borderlands for Equity
 Brennan Center for Justice
 Bridges Faith Initiative
 Brooklyn Defender Services
 Cameroon Community of Milwaukee (CAMCOMM)
 Center for Constitutional Rights
 Center for Democracy & Technology
 Center for Disability Rights
 Center for International Policy
 Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
 Center for Popular Democracy/Action
 Center for Security, Race and Rights
 Center for Victims of Torture
 Center on Conscience & War
 Charity & Security Network
 CLEAR project (Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility)
 CODEPINK
 Color Of Change
 Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition

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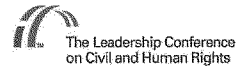
Common Cause
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington Chapter
Defending Rights & Dissent
Defender Impact Initiative
Demand Progress
Demos
Detention Watch Network
Drug Policy Alliance
Durham Youth Climate Justice Initiative
Engage Action
End Citizens United / Let America Vote Action Fund
Equal Justice Society
Equality California
Federal Public and Community Defenders
Fight for the Future
Free Press Action
Freedom Network USA
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Greenpeace US
Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
Immigrant Justice Network
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigration & Human Rights Clinic
In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda
InterAction
Interfaith Alliance
Japanese American Citizens League
Just Futures Law
Justice for Muslims Collective
Kansas Black Farmers Association/Nicodemus Educational Camps
KinderUSA
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Family Services
Louisiana Advocates for Immigrants in Detention
Matthew Shepard Foundation

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Montgomery County (MD) Civil Rights Coalition
 MPower Change
 Muslim Advocates
 Muslim Justice League
 Muslim Public Affairs Council
 NAACP
 NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC. (LDF)
 National Action Network
 National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE)
 National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
 National Bar Association
 National Council of Jewish Women
 National Education Association
 National Employment Law Project
 National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
 National Immigration Law Center
 National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild (NIPNLG)
 National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
 National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
 National Organization for Women
 National Partnership for Women & Families
 National Religious Campaign Against Torture
 National Women's Law Center
 NETWORK Lobby
 New America's Open Technology Institute
 North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers Land Loss Prevention Project
 Open MIC (Open Media & Information Companies Initiative)
 Open The Government
 Oxfam America
 Palestine Legal
 Partnership for Civil Justice Fund
 Peace Action
 PEN America
 People's Parity Project
 Presbyterian Church (USA)
 Progressive Turnout Project
 Project Blueprint
 Project On Government Oversight
 Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
 Public Citizen
 Public Justice
 Quixote Center

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Radiant International
 Restore The Fourth
 Rethinking Foreign Policy
 Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network ("RMIAN")
 Rural Coalition
 S.T.O.P. - The Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
 Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
 South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
 Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
 SPLC Action Fund
 TASH: equity, opportunity and inclusion for people with disabilities
 Texas Progressive Action Network
 The Human Trafficking Legal Center
 The Sentencing Project
 The Sikh Coalition
 Transformations CDC
 True North Research
 Tuskegee University
 UnidosUS
 Union for Reform Judaism
 United Church of Christ, OC Inc.
 UNITED SIKHS
 US Human Rights Network
 Veterans for American Ideals
 Veterans For Peace
 Voices for Progress
 Win Without War
 Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center
 Workplace Fairness

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

MARCH 24, 2021

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MOULTON

Mr. MOULTON. Dr. Cronin, in your most recent book, *Power to the People: How Open Technological Innovation is Arming Tomorrow's Terrorists*, you explore the risks and opportunities of emerging technologies and their use by terrorists and extremists. Have you seen any evidence of domestic extremist groups recruiting members of the Armed Forces for their skills in new and emerging technologies including robotics, 3-D printing, autonomous systems, or AI? What is your assessment of the potential threat to national security if domestic violent extremist organizations acquire these capabilities?

Ms. CRONIN. The use of emerging technologies such as robotics, 3-D printing, autonomous systems, or AI in the U.S. military is becoming common and accessible among U.S. troops. There is always a lag time between what the U.S. military does and what militia groups adopt, but domestic violent extremist organizations are showing strong interest in emerging technologies, especially 3-D printing and small UAVs. It is only a matter of time before they recruit for and acquire these and others, particularly as new technologies become fully integrated into U.S. military tactics and training. The diffusion of emerging technologies to extremist groups is a threat to national security and domestic stability because two key drivers are in place: U.S. domestic extremist demand and foreign terrorist incidents that U.S. groups will copy.

First, regarding demand, groups such as the Boogaloo Bois, Oath Keepers, and Atomwaffen (now called National Socialist Order) actively recruit military members and push current members to enlist. They prize training and expertise in surveillance techniques, counterintelligence, the handling of explosives, the construction of IEDs, the use of firearms, and small-unit tactics such as clearing rooms, stack formations, and fire-and-movement. For example, Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh learned how to construct and use explosives during his U.S. Army service in the first Iraq War; he then killed 168 people in the deadliest attack of domestic terrorism in U.S. history. Domestic violent extremists in the military also gain access to weapons, equipment, and other material that they can steal. For example, Atomwaffen has specifically urged members to pinch night vision goggles, explosives, and military gear. According to court records, Oath Keepers member and Air Force veteran Jessica Watkins had in her possession a small drone, alongside battle gear, radios, and numerous firearms.

Second, regarding foreign connections, there's evidence of right-wing groups abroad prizing skill in using 3-D printers and UAVs, primarily for surveillance in advance of an attack. The Christchurch, New Zealand attacker Brendan Tarrant used a UAV to conduct mosque reconnaissance in advance of his attack. In the U.S., Atomwaffen has used UAVs in propaganda videos. The Boogaloo Bois have used KeyBase, an end-to-end encrypted site with file-sharing capabilities, to share 3-D printed gun files and instructions on how to construct homemade firearms and explosives. The last three chapters of my book, in particular, have much more information about this threat.

Mr. MOULTON. Dr. Cronin, in your written testimony, you advise that "active-duty military members should have regular, periodically updated digital literacy training aimed at making them less susceptible to online misinformation, disinformation, and active recruitment". Can you please elaborate on this idea and describe what this training would look like?

Ms. CRONIN. Digital literacy for active-duty military members is as vital as weapons training, military drill, physical fitness, technical schooling, or effective tactical skills—indeed, in our current historical context, perhaps more so. Influence operations from both internal and external actors are targeting the Armed Forces. Our failure to teach servicemembers at all ranks to recognize the threat and to defend themselves undermines American strength from within, without a shot being fired.

The training should first establish the facts and indicate why the training is needed. For context, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, we had a series of educational activities that explained what Sunni extremism was—the various groups, history, demographics, ideology, symbols, etc.—to prepare our military members to recognize it. I know this because I was involved in a great many of them. We armed our

servicemembers and DOD civilians with the facts they needed to understand and respond to the threat. I should also note that we placed a great deal of emphasis on distinguishing between the tiny number of Sunni extremists who were in violent terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda, and the vast number of innocent co-religionists who were often victims of Al-Qaeda violence themselves and deserved protection.

Today we could begin by doing the same kind of analysis of the threat of U.S. domestic extremism (or terrorism). Fact-based education about the landscape of U.S. domestic violent extremism (right-wing, left-wing, and others) can draw upon a deep history and ample widely agreed evidence. Informative content might be presented in a series of short videos covering key elements, including the characteristics, symbols, ideologies, and evolution of various known domestic extremist groups. The overview could end with the present day, including the very small number of active-duty—and the larger number of veterans—involved in extremist groups. Individual names would be anonymized, ongoing cases avoided, individual rights carefully respected; however, the state of play is not that difficult to draw together in an apolitical way for the basic education of the force.

After establishing the what and the why, the focus should shift to the how, and here is where the focus would be specifically on digital tools. Of all the training that current military members and DOD civilians are required to take, the most sophisticated is Information Assurance Training, especially the “Cyber Awareness Challenge.” With the facts established, digital literacy training might employ the same “game-style” approach, oriented toward recognizing, avoiding, and resisting specific disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation techniques.

Fortunately, we do not have to create this digital curriculum from scratch. We can follow the lead of the Scandinavians, who have dealt with disinformation campaigns for decades. In particular, the Swedes have put in place digital literacy training called Countering Information Influence Activities. It is designed to counter the systematic use of deceptive techniques, especially online and via social media. The first half includes practical ways to recognize influence techniques, such as social and cognitive hacking, deceptive identities, technical manipulation (bots, sockpuppets, deepfakes, phishing), disinformation, malicious rhetoric, and symbolic actions (hacking, orchestrated protests, boosted messaging). The second half explains how to neutralize digital manipulation, including pre-bunking specious arguments, responding with facts, checking sources, and blocking or exposing those behind the disinformation.

Educational content might be delivered in small segments. Shorter videos and targeted online courses are effective at changing behaviors and reducing vulnerability. For example, in 2016, a RAND/IREX study found that watching a 2-minute video about media literacy messaging made users significantly less likely to engage with disinformation. The National Association for Media Literacy Education and the New America Foundation are both developing tools for digital media education that could be adapted for the military. At New America, Peter Singer and Eric Johnson have also suggested a range of self-study lessons, including guided discussions at the platoon level and leadership professional development courses for officers and NCOs.

A crucial element of digital literacy is ensuring that those at every level of leadership—from commanders to recruiters to sergeants training raw recruits—can recognize common memes, symbols, and slogans of domestic extremists. In the 1990s, recruiters had a large reference book that helped identify gang tattoos and symbols grouped according to U.S. location. That kind of information should be readily available in online databases, updated with FBI information and easily accessible, especially to commanders, military lawyers, and military police.

Many of the newer groups, such as Proud Boys and Boogaloo Bois, deliberately use “whimsical” memes and uniforms, such as Pepe the Frog and Hawaiian shirts, that camouflage their violent intent and avoid content moderation. Everyone knows what a Swastika or “SS” means; however, commanders or sergeants may be unaware of what “6MWE” or “RWDS” signify, to cite two examples. A game might include pictures of people hanging out together, wearing t-shirts with logos or showing off a new tattoo, etc. The trainee would need to identify whether any of these memes or logos is dangerous? What does it stand for? Which extremist group does it come from? Again, frequent updating would be crucial.

A final point: Question-for-the-record #11 notes that the FY21 NDAA (Sec. 589E, Training Program Regarding Foreign Malign Influence Campaigns) requires the Secretary of Defense to establish a program for training servicemembers and civilian employees about the threat of malign foreign influence. A well-designed, effective digital literacy program could make active-duty members less susceptible to online targeting by both domestic extremists and malign foreign actors. Mainly because there are overlaps in online targeting techniques, it might make sense to com-

bine efforts and have one extremely well-produced, state-of-the-art digital training program that covers both. (The answer to Question #11 also includes information relevant to this question.)

Mr. MOULTON. What role should social media platforms play in protecting our service members and veterans from nefarious actors like domestic violent extremist organizations? Should social media companies work with the Department of Defense to impose tighter controls on how service member data is collected, stored, and shared with 3rd party vendors? I welcome all witnesses to respond.

Ms. CRONIN. In general, I do not think social media companies have the necessary military expertise to protect service members from domestic violent extremists—although that certainly does not eliminate their responsibility for this problem. A better approach would be to require social media companies and, even more critical, providers of website forums such as Reddit, Parler, Clouthub, Rocketchat, Matrix and others, to have greater accountability for policing and removing violent, hateful insurrectionist material that is hosted on their platforms. Doing so would protect former servicemembers, too. These tech companies have ample resources to do that but either actively resist or treat it as an afterthought, especially after a crisis draws attention to the problem.

Concerning collecting, storing, and sharing data with third-party vendors, yes, there should be tighter controls on how servicemember data is handled. The fact that U.S. servicemembers can be tracked via apps on their mobile phones, and that commercial data can then be bought and sold in bulk by America's adversaries, is a glaring vulnerability. The NSA has warned all military and intelligence-community personnel about geolocation data and other digital exhaust that reveals personal movement, search histories, locations of personal residences, and so forth. Yet, it is treated as more of an independent responsibility than a systemic liability. That approach is insufficient.

This question of controlling American servicemember data is one part of a much bigger problem. The hugely profitable commercial data broker industry is unconstrained in the United States. Unlike in China and even the European Union, the data of American citizens is virtually unregulated and undefended. For reasons of U.S. national security, the sale of U.S. commercial data badly needs regulation and oversight.

Mr. MOULTON. I would like to draw the witnesses' attention to a more insidious infection of extremism in the ranks, and it has reared its ugly head in the shockingly high percentage of troops who are refusing to take the COVID-19 vaccine: as many as one third of service members have opted out. These troops may not be co-opted by domestic terrorists, but they are clearly influenced by conspiracy theorists online. And that is dangerous for U.S. national security as online disinformation is directly threatening the United States military's readiness. Russia and China know this. They have online campaigns to sow doubt in our vaccines. The Pentagon clearly needs to develop a more aggressive campaign to counter Russian and Chinese disinformation, but that is not enough. I would like the witnesses' assessment of how we can also insulate the force against domestic disinformation without infringing upon the Constitutional freedoms of all Americans.

Ms. CRONIN. The COVID-19 vaccine is still very new and has been under emergency FDA authorization. I believe that once the FDA fully approves the vaccine, it will be possible to mandate that all servicemembers receive it (unless there is a mitigating medical condition). Servicemembers are routinely required to receive many vaccines—from tetanus to yellow fever to anthrax to flu. The COVID-19 vaccine could be added to the list of jabs they receive as a matter of routine.

I agree that disinformation is a pernicious problem that undermines confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine and reduces the United States military's readiness. The best way to insulate the force against domestic disinformation without infringing upon the Constitutional freedoms of all Americans is to institute better education and digital literacy training. I have explained what a digital literacy effort might look like in my answer to question-for-the-record #6. Digital literacy training does not teach participants what to think but how to think critically about the information they encounter. Our servicemembers must be better equipped to resist conspiracy theories and misinformation. Fact-based digital literacy and education is a proven way to do that.

Mr. MOULTON. What role should social media platforms play in protecting our service members and veterans from nefarious actors like domestic violent extremist organizations? Should social media companies work with the Department of Defense to impose tighter controls on how service member data is collected, stored, and shared with 3rd party vendors? I welcome all witnesses to respond.

Ms. BROOKS. *What role should social media platforms play in protecting our service members and veterans from nefarious actors like domestic violent extremist organizations?*

SPLC believes that each of the military service branches must address the problem of extremism at every stage of a servicemember's career—better screening during the recruitment process, an updated, expanded prohibition against advocating for, or involvement in, supremacist or extremist activity for all active-duty military, and more extensive efforts to help veterans transition into civilian life.

Social media and tech platforms are largely owned and managed by the private sector, not the government. However, we strongly believe these corporations must be part of the solution to address the promulgation of hateful activities online. Far-right extremists have seized upon new technologies—especially encrypted, decentralized, and peer-to-peer services—to organize, spread propaganda, and recruit new members. As the SPLC noted in our *Year in Hate and Extremism 2020* report, far-right extremists' reliance on some of these platforms for recruiting, organizing, and propagandizing is profound.¹

Social media platforms have many of the tools they need to reduce online hate activities, but they lack the will to do so. For decades, the SPLC has been fighting hate and exposing how hate groups and other extremists use the internet. Most tech companies have their own Terms of Service, essentially rules of the road. We have lobbied internet companies, one by one, to create and enforce policies and Terms of Service to ensure that their social media platforms, payment service providers, and other internet-based services do not foster hate, discrimination, or extremism. Unfortunately, major tech platforms have, time and time again, chosen profit over progress. Their intransigence on robust content moderation has allowed hate speech, conspiracy theories, and disinformation to flourish.²

While the deadly January 6 insurrectionist riots at the U.S. Capitol tested the will of tech companies to tackle extremism, it has also underlined the importance of the ongoing discussion regarding regulating these platforms as well. In particular, it has shored up additional support for a conversation about the updating or reforming a key piece of legislation regulating tech companies. This provision, known as Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, has long shielded companies from liability for users' content on their platforms. In considering platform regulations and changes to Section 230, Congress must clearly define the problem it seeks to address and then ensure that any proposed changes will not do more harm than good.

On Jan. 29, 2021, Representative Jackie Speier wrote to President Biden, Secretary of Defense Austin, and Director of National Intelligence Haines urging more extensive social media screening for new recruits and servicemembers seeking security clearances for white supremacist and violent extremist ties.³ We share Rep. Speier's view that the Department of Defense must make more extensive efforts to ensure that recruiters and commanders responsible for identifying and addressing prohibited activities and discriminatory harassment have the education and training to recognize behaviors (social media or chat group activity), indicators (tattoos, symbols, or paraphernalia), or other signs of involvement with supremacist ideology and activity. More extensive background investigations—including social media footprints—of individuals who seek security clearances is also essential.⁴

In addition, an October 2020 report mandated by the FY 2020 NDAA examined the security and effectiveness of existing screening for individuals who seek to enlist in the military. Among other things, the report recommended closer cooperation with the FBI, including expanded use of its database of extremist tattoos and more attention to potential recruits' social media presence.⁵ Consistent with First Amendment and appropriate privacy concerns, we support more extensive use of easily accessible public source internet information about potential military recruits.

¹"The Year in Hate and Extremism 2020," Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 1, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/year-hate-and-extremism-2020>.

²Hannah Gais, "Has Accountability for Big Tech Come Too Late?," <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2021/02/16/has->

<https://speier.house.gov/cache/files/9/2/9260a8a5-70e8-4a5a-b803-63762ce719ee/0DC836C67FFBB4841B15B7D7FE5295EB.2021-1-29-letter-to-potus-secdef-dni-social-media-clearance-recruiting.pdf>.

⁴Meghann Myers, "STRATCOM boss clarifies comments on 'zero' extremism in his organization," *Military Times*, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2021/04/22/stratcom-boss-clarifies-comments-on-zero-extremism-in-his-organization/>, April 22, 2021.

⁵"Reports to Armed Services Committees on Screening Individuals Who Seek to Enlist in the Armed Forces," https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/20486018-congressional-report-hasc-study-regarding-screening-individuals-who-seek-to-enlist-in-the-armed-forces_pl_-92-14-oct-20.

Finally, as we stated in our March 24 testimony before the Committee, SPLC believe that, consistent with the First Amendment, the Department of Defense should expand and clarify existing prohibitions against active duty personnel advocating for, or involvement in, supremacist or extremist activity,⁶ including updating and revising the provisions of

Department of Defense Instructions Number 1325.06.⁷ To the greatest extent possible, these extremism-related institutional reforms should be made uniform from service to service.

Should social media companies work with the Department of Defense to impose tighter controls on how servicemember data is collected, stored, and shared with 3rd party vendors? I welcome all witnesses to respond.

SPLC has no policy position on this question.

Mr. MOULTON. I would like to draw the witnesses' attention to a more insidious infection of extremism in the ranks, and it has reared its ugly head in the shockingly high percentage of troops who are refusing to take the COVID-19 vaccine: as many as one third of service members have opted out. These troops may not be co-opted by domestic terrorists, but they are clearly influenced by conspiracy theorists online. And that is dangerous for U.S. national security as online disinformation is directly threatening the United States military's readiness. Russia and China know this. They have online campaigns to sow doubt in our vaccines. The Pentagon clearly needs to develop a more aggressive campaign to counter Russian and Chinese disinformation, but that is not enough. I would like the witnesses' assessment of how we can also insulate the force against domestic disinformation without infringing upon the Constitutional freedoms of all Americans.

Ms. BROOKS. SPLC has not done a lot of work in this arena. But we are impressed with reports and studies emerging from Finland that evidence how impactful an empirically-guided, well-structured program of digital and media literacy can be for inoculating a society to the harms of disinformation and misinformation, extremism, and radicalization. *The Guardian* reported in January of 2020 that Finland "top[s], by some margin, an annual index measuring resistance to fake news in 35 European countries, adding that "the programme aims to ensure that everyone, from pupil to politician, can detect—and do their bit to fight—false information."⁸ Finland demonstrates how civil society and government may play an ethical, cutting-edge role in helping citizens safeguard their families and communities to such harms through education.

Mr. MOULTON. What role should social media platforms play in protecting our service members and veterans from nefarious actors like domestic violent extremist organizations? Should social media companies work with the Department of Defense to impose tighter controls on how service member data is collected, stored, and shared with 3rd party vendors? I welcome all witnesses to respond.

Mr. BERRY. Social media platforms should be treated no more or less favorably than any other entity with which the government interacts. The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs should maintain their primary focus on service members' and veterans' conduct. But due to the enormous influence and common carrier-like status social media platforms wield, if a social media platform has credible evidence that a service member or veteran is engaged in violent extremist conduct, it is reasonable to expect them to report it. I do not have a professional opinion as to whether the Department of Defense should impose tighter controls on how service member data is collected, stored, and shared.

Mr. MOULTON. I would like to draw the witnesses' attention to a more insidious infection of extremism in the ranks, and it has reared its ugly head in the shockingly high percentage of troops who are refusing to take the COVID-19 vaccine: as many as one third of service members have opted out. These troops may not be co-opted by domestic terrorists, but they are clearly influenced by conspiracy

⁶In its December 2020, report, "Recommendations to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military," the Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion, at 51, included a recommendation to prohibit extremist or hate group activity, emphasizing that "[t]his recommendation sends a clear and forceful message that DoD is committed to improving inclusivity. Service member participation in hate groups not only erodes the public's trust in their defense institution but also compromises our organization's lethality." <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/18/2002554852/-1/-1/0/DOD-DIVERSITY-AND-INCLUSION-FINAL-BOARD-REPORT.PDF>.

⁷DoDI 1325.06, "Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, Nov. 27, 2009, Incorporating Change 1, Feb. 22, 2012. <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/132506p.pdf>.

⁸Jon Henley, "How Finland starts its fight against fake news in primary schools," *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/fact-from-fiction-finlands-new-lessons-in-combating-fake-news> January, 29, 2020.

theorists online. And that is dangerous for U.S. national security as online disinformation is directly threatening the United States military's readiness. Russia and China know this. They have online campaigns to sow doubt in our vaccines. The Pentagon clearly needs to develop a more aggressive campaign to counter Russian and Chinese disinformation, but that is not enough. I would like the witnesses' assessment of how we can also insulate the force against domestic disinformation without infringing upon the Constitutional freedoms of all Americans.

Mr. BERRY. Due to some of my recent military assignments, I am acutely aware of the role information operations plays in matters of national security. I am not aware of any foolproof method to insulate the force against disinformation campaigns. As long as we have access to information, we will be susceptible to disinformation and information operations. I am also unaware of any documented link between service members who refuse to receive the Covid-19 vaccine and such disinformation campaigns. It is important to note that there is a significant percentage of the service member population that objects to vaccinations due to sincerely held religious beliefs. These religious objections to vaccines have long pre-dated Covid-19. Any attempts or efforts to compel or coerce service members to take a vaccine contrary to sincerely held religious beliefs raises serious constitutional questions. One possible approach might be for the Department of Defense to undertake its own positive information operations campaign; highlight the positives of military service, patriotism, etc., while rebuking violent extremism and casting it in a negative light. In this manner, we can reinforce positive perceptions about the American military, while receiving the collateral benefit of sending a message of strength, unity, and cohesion to America's adversaries.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MORELLE

Mr. MORELLE. FY21 NDAA includes language (Sec. 589E, Training Program Regarding Foreign Malign Influence Campaigns) requiring the Secretary of Defense to establish a program for training service members and civilian employees regarding the threat of foreign malign influence. What are best practices you would recommend the Secretary of Defense apply when implementing this program in 2021?

Ms. CRONIN. Unfortunately, we are already in a kind of ongoing "war": information operations playing out in the cognitive dimension have tangible effects on our Armed Forces' fitness, readiness, and unit cohesion. For that reason, we should think of our response more as active defense or "war-gaming" rather than yet another mandated training exercise that ticks a box. This is about the fundamental integrity of the force. I recommend that the department not use PowerPoint briefings, lengthy handbooks, and multiple-choice tests. Instead, employ fact-based short videos, interactive first-person games, and state-of-the-art simulations that match the sophistication of the threat we face. We must ensure the training is updated at least annually, including proven, up-to-date and well-researched examples of foreign actor interference or influence, drawn from material produced by people with dedicated, in-depth expertise. The Department has excellent FFRDC organizations such as RAND, IDA, and CNA, with outstanding analysts who could create this kind of state-of-the-art product. Or you could support peer-reviewed research at private universities and Centers like my own, or perhaps at Stanford University or Carnegie Mellon University, using public-private partnerships to produce excellent work that treats this problem with the seriousness it deserves. The threat of malign foreign influence is not entirely separate from the domestic violent extremist threat. We do have a long-standing, deep, historical problem with domestic violent extremism at home, especially anti-government and white supremacist terrorism, but at various times also left-wing terrorism. On top of this, state adversaries are interfering directly or using proxies to accelerate U.S. domestic polarization and extremism. Foreign actors are facilitating overseas contact and training, amplifying extreme voices on social media (e.g., through bots or fake accounts), providing cryptocurrency to groups, and hosting extremist chat rooms on foreign servers, for example. We are well behind the curve in addressing this problem and need to devote more of our cognitive resources to solving it. It is a serious threat to U.S. national security.

Mr. MORELLE. Dr. Cronin, the total numbers of extremists in the military appear small, yet their impact can be enormous. Can you explain that impact?

Ms. CRONIN. We do not know whether the numbers are small or large. As I mentioned in my testimony, the most important thing the Armed Forces can do is to collect rigorous data that will help us respond. You cannot fix what you cannot measure, and no serious plan can be built without defining the scope of the problem.

If we assume that the number of extremists in the military is small, their impact can nonetheless be significant because they undermine the trust upon which military effectiveness relies. Even a few extremists affect: 1) unit cohesion and morale; 2) the integrity of the chain of command; and 3) the faith of the American people.

Unit cohesion and morale are threatened when servicemembers hate, threaten, and harass each other. Servicemembers are free to hold their own political views. Still, they are not free to act illegally on extreme political beliefs whether their motivations are white supremacist, racist, left-wing, nationalist, populist, libertarian, authoritarian, or anything else. Unit cohesion depends on trust. Trust disappears when there are cleavages within the ranks instead of a united front against an adversary.

Second, extremists in the military undermine the chain of command. Servicemembers who either follow or decline to follow orders based on their extremist ideas weaken the fighting ability and integrity of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Third, as mentioned in my testimony, Americans' trust in the U.S. Armed Forces is declining. Any hint of violent extremism among those to whom the American people entrust sensitive secrets and deadly weapons is alarming. Members of the Armed Forces must be held to a higher standard of integrity than the general public is.

Mr. MORELLE. FY21 NDAA includes language (Sec. 589E, Training Program Regarding Foreign Malign Influence Campaigns) requiring the Secretary of Defense to establish a program for training service members and civilian employees regarding the threat of foreign malign influence. What are best practices you would recommend the Secretary of Defense apply when implementing this program in 2021?

Ms. BROOKS. SPLC has no policy position on this question.

Mr. MORELLE. Ms. Brooks, the total numbers of extremists in the military appear small, yet their impact can be enormous. Can you explain that impact?

Ms. BROOKS. It is true that the vast majority of those who serve in our Armed Forces have no connection to white supremacy or extremism and uphold the best traditions of our nation's democratic ideals. Though the overall number of extremists associated with the Armed Forces who engage in hate crimes and criminal extremist activity is relatively small, there are many reasons to take this threat seriously and ensure that the problem is effectively addressed.

First, servicemembers capabilities and specialized weapons training make them prime targets for extremist propaganda and recruitment.⁹

Second, veterans and servicemembers bring social capital, legitimacy, specialized training, and an increased capacity for violence¹⁰ to white power groups and other extremists.¹¹

Third, when servicemembers and veterans do engage with extremist groups and individuals, they frequently take on leadership roles. For example, analyses of two terrorism crime databases show that "rightwing terrorists" are significantly more likely to have military experience than any other category of terrorists indicted in U.S. federal courts." Between 1980 and 2002, 18% of far-right terrorists indicted in federal courts had military experience. The same study showed that "over 40% of rightwing terrorists with military experience assumed some position of leadership within their organization," making them more than twice as likely to end up in

⁹ Kristy N. Kamarck, "Military Personnel and Extremism: Law, Policy, and Considerations for Congress," Congressional Research Services, CRS Insight IN11086, May 16, 2019, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11086>.

¹⁰ "Having members with military backgrounds may increase a group's propensity towards violence in several ways. First, former members of the military may have particular technical and leadership skills that can be used by the group to commit violence. ... This skill set includes extensive training in the use of weapons, explosives, and combat strategies. Second, military veterans turned activist may have specific grievances directed at the government. Thus, we hypothesize that groups that have members with previous military training will be more likely to be involved in violence." See Steven M. Chermak, Joshua D. Freilich and Michael Suttmoeller, "The Organizational Dynamics of Far-Right Hate Groups in the United States: Comparing Violent to Non-Violent Organizations," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, Dec. 2011. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/944_OPSR_TEVUS_Comparing-Violent-Nonviolent-Far-Right-Hate-Groups_Dec2011-508.pdf.

¹¹ "Extremist leaders seek to recruit members with military experience in order to exploit their discipline, knowledge of firearms, explosives, and tactical skills and access to weapons and intelligence." FBI Intelligence Assessment, "White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel since 9/11" (unclassified), July 7, 2008, <https://documents.law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/White%20Supremacist%20Recruitment%20of%20Military%20Personnel%20Since%209-11-ocr.pdf>.

leadership than someone without military training.¹² A study by Pete Simi and Bryan Bubolz found that, in a sample of far-right extremists (FRTs) gathered from the American Terrorism Study database, open sources, and interviews, at least 31% had military experience—as compared to 10% of the U.S. population at large. “More specifically,” they wrote, “we found 17 percent of the FRTs with military experience were founders of their FRT organizations, 22 percent were leaders in their FRT organizations, and the remaining 43% were core members of their FRT organizations.”¹³

The fact that one in five of those arrested in connection with the deadly Capitol insurrection on January 6 has served, or was serving, in the military is partly a legacy of the military’s long-running failure to adequately monitor for extremist links, address the presence of extremists in its ranks and inoculate veterans against adopting extremist ideologies.¹⁴

Finally, as was repeatedly raised at the March 24 hearings—by both Democratic and Republican Committee members—there is a paucity of reliable data collected on both the number of extremists and the extent of white supremacist influence in the Armed Services.

According to a 2019 poll conducted by *Military Times*, 36% of active-duty servicemembers who were surveyed reported seeing signs of white nationalism or racist ideology in the Armed Forces—a significant rise from the year before, when 22% reported witnessing these extremist views.¹⁵ In the same survey, more than half of servicemembers of color reported experiencing incidents of racism or racist ideology, up from 42% in 2017.¹⁶ These numbers jumped again in 2020, when a *Military Times* poll conducted in the midst of nationwide racial justice protests last summer found that 57% of servicemembers of color said they had witnessed these incidents in their ranks. Likewise, of all the troops who participated in the survey, 48% listed white nationalists as a major national security threat—a mere half of a percentage point below the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda, and other foreign terrorist organizations.¹⁷

We should not have to rely on *Military Times* for this information. Instead, we urge each service branch to institute annual voluntary, confidential climate surveys to enable military personnel to anonymously report their exposure to white supremacy and extremist views during their service. A report based on the surveys, focused on the erosion of unit cohesion and the impact exposure to white supremacy and extremism has on good order, discipline, morale, and readiness, should be made available to the public annually.

Mr. MORELLE. FY21 NDAA includes language (Sec. 589E, Training Program Regarding Foreign Malign Influence Campaigns) requiring the Secretary of Defense to establish a program for training service members and civilian employees regarding the threat of foreign malign influence. What are best practices you would recommend the Secretary of Defense apply when implementing this program in 2021?

Mr. BERRY. In my personal experience, the most effective and memorable training has been through the use of case studies. Instead of discussing the threat of foreign malign influence as academic concepts, the Department might observe better results through the use of declassified, real-world examples. Service members, like all of us, are more likely to retain information that is presented in a manner that is relatable to the world with which we are familiar.

¹²Brent L. Smith, Kelly Damphousse, Steven Chermak, and Joshua Freilich, “Right Wing Extremism and Military Service,” in Andrew J. Bringuel, Federal Bureau of Investigation (U.S.), Jenelle Janowicz, Abelardo C. Vilida, and Edna F. Reid, eds., *Terrorism Research and Analysis Project (TRAP): A Collection of Research Ideas, Theories and Perspectives* (Washington, DC: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011), 361–362.

¹³Pete Simi and Bryan Bubolz, “Military Experience, Identity Discrepancies, and Far Right Terrorism: An Exploratory Analysis,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260780820_Military_Experience_Identity_Discrepancies_and_Far_Right_Terrorism_An_Exploratory_Analysis, August 2013, 660.

¹⁴Tom Dreisbach and Meg Anderson, “Nearly 1 in 5 Defendants in Capitol Riot Cases Served in the Military,” *NPR*, Jan. 21, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/21/958915267/nearly-one-in-five-defendants-in-capitol-riot-cases-served-in-the-military>

¹⁵Leo Shane III, “Signs of White Supremacy, Extremism Up Again in Poll of Active Duty Troops,” *Military Times*, Feb. 6, 2020. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/02/06/signs-of-white-supremacy-extremism-up-again-in-poll-of-active-duty-troops/>.

¹⁶Leo Shane III, “One in Four Troops Sees White Nationalism in the Ranks,” *Military Times*, Oct. 23, 2017. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2017/10/23/military-times-poll-one-in-four-troops-sees-white-nationalism-in-the-ranks/>.

¹⁷Leo Shane, III, “Troops: White nationalism a national security threat equal to ISIS, al-Qaeda,” *Military Times*, Sept. 3, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/09/03/troops-white-nationalism-a-national-security-threat-equal-to-isis-al-qaeda/>.

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Berry, the total numbers of extremists in the military appear small, yet their impact can be enormous. Can you explain that impact?

Mr. BERRY. It cannot be overstated that nobody wants to see true extremists removed from our military more than those who serve. Those of us who consider it an honor and privilege to wear the uniform of the United States are repulsed by the notion of violent extremists in our ranks. The impact that true extremists—even if they comprise only a fraction of the total force—have can indeed be enormous. They can negatively affect a military unit's moral and cohesion. Perhaps worse, they can erode the public's trust and confidence in the military and its service members. But the same negative consequences and impact result from mislabeling those who hold to different, even unpopular, religious and political beliefs as extremists. That is why it is inappropriate and constitutionally dubious to attempt to regulate thoughts and beliefs, as opposed to conduct.

